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T H E
Christian Life.

P A R T II.

Wherein the
Fundamental Principles
O F
Christian Duty

Are Assigned, Explained *and* Proved.

V O L U M E I.

By J O H N S C O T T, D.D. Rector
of S. Peter Poor, London.

The Fifth Edition Corrected.

L O N D O N,

Printed by J. H. for *Walter Kettilby* at the
Bishop's Head in St. Paul's Church-Yard,
and *Thomas Horne* at the South Entrance of
the Royal Exchange in Cornhill. 1700.

THE
Christian Life.

PART II.

Wherin the
Fundamental Principles
OF
Christian Duty

Are Assigned, Explained and Proved.

VOLUME I.

By JOHN SCOTT, D.D. Rector
of St. Peter's Church, London.

With a new Edition of the

LONDON.

Printed by J. M. for W. & A. Knapton at the
Sign of the Star in St. Paul's Church-Yard
and Thomas Warton at the South Entrance of
the Royal Exchange in Cornhill. 1700.

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
AND

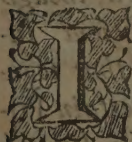
Right Reverend Father in God

HENRY

Lord Bishop of London,

And one of his Majesty's most Honourable
Privy Council, &c.

My Lord,



*Here present to Your
Lordship the first Volume
of a second Part of that
Treatise of Christian Life,
which I published some
years since, and which under the*

The Epistle Dedicatory.

Protection of your Venerable Name hath found good acceptance with the World; and to make an ingenuous Confession to your Lordship, my Design in this second Dedication is not purely to render you the due Respects of a Presbyter to his Dioceſan; nor to tender thoſe juſt Acknowledgments I owe to your Lordſhip for the happineſs I have enjoy'd, with the reſt of your Clergy, under the auſpicious Influence of your ſerene and watchful Government; no, nor yet to expreſs the grateful ſenſe I have, and ſhall always retain, of the perſonal Obligations you have laid upon me; no, my Lord, though theſe were all of them ſufficient Inducements, yet I confeſs, that together with theſe, I had a certain Politick end in my eye. For I thank God I can truly ſay, my main Deſign in compoſing this Treatiſe was to
benefit

The Epistle Dedicatory.

benefit the World; but reflecting upon the manifold defects it abounds with after all the pains I had bestowed upon it, I found that, to palliate its internal blemishes, it was but needful to grace it with some external Ornament, and could think of none so proper for my purpose as this of affixing your Lordship's Name to it; a Name that carries with it power enough to recommend any thing to the World that is but pious, and honest, and well-designed, and all that, I am sure, this is, how defective soever it be in other respects; which together with the experience I have had of the great candor and benignity of your Lordship's temper, gives me encouragement to hope that you will not only accept but approve it; and then I am sure your Lordship's approbation will give it credit and authority enough
with

The Epistle Dedicatory.

*with the World to enable it to effect
those good and honest ends for
which it was sincerely intended
by,*

My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most Humble,

Most Obliged, and

Faithful Servant,

John Scott.

THE
PREFACE
TO THE
READER.

WHEN I wrote the Treatise of *Christian Life*, of which *this* and *another* Volume, now in the Press, is a *second* Part, I had no design of engaging any further in that Argument; but *now* I find by experience, that *Writing* is like *Building*, wherein the Undertaker, to supply some defect, or serve some convenience which at first he *foresaw* not, is usually forced to exceed his first *Model* and *Proposal*, and many times to double the charge and expence of it. For after that Treatise began to be a little known in the World,

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I was advised from several hands that there was one thing *wanting* in it, which is the common *defect* of most *practical* Treatises, and that was, an *Explication* and *Proof* of those main *Principles* of Religion in which the *Obligation* of our Christian Duty is *founded*, which they thought might be sufficiently done within a very *narrow* compass, though herein I find that either they were very much *mistaken*, or that I have very much *exceeded* the necessary limits of my Argument, which I am not yet convinced of, but *that* I must submit to the judgment of the World. I confess the prospect of doing it in that *narrow* compass *they* talk'd of was a great inducement with me to undertake it, and perhaps had I *foreseen* at first what a *large* Field of Discourse it would oblige me to traverse, I should never have *entered* on it; but when once I was *in*, I could not handsomely *retreat*.

And

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And indeed Considering with what prodigious *rudeness* and *insolence* the very *foundations* of Religion are struck at in this *dissolute* Age, he who would *now* treat of them to any purpose will find himself obliged not only to give a distinct and clear *explication* of them, but also to assert the *truth* of them with convincing *evidence*, and to *answer* and *expose* those *Atheistical Cavils* that are levelled against them; which *latter* would have been much less necessary in an Age of a more *serious* and *Religious* Genius. And upon this account I have been forced upon a much *larger* and more *laborious* proof of the several *Principles* of Religion than I first intended. Not that I have any great hope of reclaiming those who are *professed* Atheists to the acknowledgment of the *truth*; for when men are *seduced* by *lust*, as I verily believe most Atheists are, there is little reason to expect they will be re-

a 2. *duced.*

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duced by Reason. But that which I chiefly aimed at is to *confirm* and *establish* those that are wavering, and to *Antidote* all against this spreading contagion of *Irreligion* and *Atheism*, which in a fatal Chain draws after it not only the ruin of mens Souls *hereafter*, but also the utter subversion of all Humane Society *here*; And it is *this* hath constrained me to enlarge this *second* Part into *two* Volumes, which at first view I promised my self to finish in *one*.

In this *first* Volume I have treated only of *those* Principles which are common to *natural Religion* and *Christianity* together; as an Introduction to which I have in the *first* Chapter *explained* and *demonstrated* the *natural* distinction of Humane Actions into *good* and *evil*, by some *eternal* Reason *for* or *against* them; and having shewn at large that God hath made this distinction sufficiently clear and evident to all men to enable them to conduct themselves to their
own

The Preface.

own *happiness*, & that those actions of men which fall under this *natural* distinction are the principal subject matter of the commands and prohibitions of Religion. I proceed in the second Chapter briefly to explain the nature of Religion in *general*, and of natural and Christian Religion in *particular* : from the nature of *both* which I have deduced those fundamental Principles from whence the Obligations of Religion are derived; the five first of which being common to *natural Religion* with *Christianity*, I have handled in this first Volume in so many distinct Chapters.

And then as for the *last*, viz. the acknowledgment of *Jesus Christ* our *Mediator*, which contains under it all those Religious Principles that are peculiar to *Christianity*, though I have endeavoured to treat of it with all the brevity that is consistent with a clear and satisfactory account of the whole Argument, yet it is run out into a *second*

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Volume, which is now in the Press, and, I hope, within a few Weeks will be ready to follow *this*. And perhaps when the Reader considers the *copiousness* of the Argument it handles, he will rather blame me for being too brief than too tedious ; for in treating of those Doctrines which have been handled *at large* in other English Treatises of the Christian Faith, and especially in that incomparable one of our most learned Bishop of *Chester*, on the *Creed* (a Book which next to the Bible I thankfully acknowledg my self more beholden to for my instruction in the Doctrines of Religion than to any *one* I ever read) I have contracted my self into as *narrow* a compass as barely the *necessary* application of them would permit me ; but where that *renowned* Pen hath insisted more *Cursorily* (as for instance on the particular Offices of our blessed *Mediator*) I have most *enlarged* my self, though even *there* I have for
brevity

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brevity sake *pretermitted* some things I intended less *immediate* and *necessary* appertaining to the Argument.

Upon the whole I can truly say, that to the best of my understanding, I have herein delivered nothing but what is agreeable to the Doctrine of the *Primitive Church*, which as the most *faithful* Comment on the holy Writings of our Saviour and his Apostles I have all along *carefully* consulted in *doubtful* and *difficult* cases; and this is the reason why it hath stuck so long in hand, the pains I have taken in consulting the *antient* Monuments of Christianity about it, being, as I may truly say, at least *double* to that of *composing* it; and in following the *Primitive* Doctrine, I have followed the Doctrine of the *Church of England*, which in its *Faith*, *Government*, and *Discipline*, I believe in my Conscience, is the *most* *Primitive Church* in the World.

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As for the *Method* I have chosen, which is to deduce all the Doctrines of Christianity from one *general Head*, viz. the Doctrin of the *Mediator*, it is the most *convenient* I could think of for my purpose, which was to represent at once to the Readers view *all* the parts of our holy Religion in their natural connexion *with* and dependance *on* one another, that so he might be the better able to judge of the *beautiful* contexture and *admirable* contrivance of the whole, and that by seeing how *regularly* all the parts of it proceed out of *one* common Principle, and *conspire* in *one* common End, he may be the better satisfied that Christianity is so far from being a heap of *incoherencies*, as some have *injuriously* represented it, that considering it merely as an *Hypothesis*, abstracted from all that *external* evidence that accompanies it, the very *art* and *contrivance* of it, the *proportion*, *symmetry*, and *correspondence* of its parts, their *sub-*
serviency

The Preface.

serviency to each other, and the *concurrency* and *tendency* of them altogether to the common *ends* of Religion, are such as do apparently exceed all *humane* Invention, and argue it to be the product of a *divine* Mind. For as he who would form a true *Idea* of the *beauty* of a *Picture*, must not contemplate the parts of it *separately*, but survey them all *together*, and consider them in their *proportions* and *correspondencies* with each other, so he who would frame a right Notion of Religion must not look upon it as it lies *scattered* and *divided* into *single* parts and propositions, but consider them in *contexture*, and as they are connected all together into one *body* or *hypothesis*. For it is in their apt *junctures*, their mutual *dependencies* and admirable *coherencies* with one another • that the *beauty* and *harmony* of the whole consists. And therefore to do *right* to Christianity, and enable the Reader to contemplate it with the greatest *ad-*
vantage,

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vantage, I have endeavour'd to represent to him the whole in a *view*, and to give him a prospect of *all* the parts of it *together*, in an harmonious *union* and *connexion* with each other. For I verily believe that the *mean* opinion which some witty men have entertained of Christianity, proceeds in a great measure from their *broken* and *imperfect* apprehensions of it ; they understand it *piecemeal*, and take it asunder into *single* propositions, which they consider *separately* and *apart* by themselves, without ever putting them together into one *regular* System, and presenting them to their thoughts in that *orderly* connexion wherein the holy *Oracles* have delivered them to us. For I can scarce imagine how any man of sense should contemplate Christianity *all together*, and *thoroughly* consider the *harmonious* coherence of all its *parts*, and the *wonderful* contrivance of the *whole*, without being captivated with the *beauty* and *elegancy* of it. And

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And now I have nothing farther to add concerning this Treatise but only to intreat the Reader not to be too *severe* in the perusal of it. For though as for the *Doctrin* of it, I see no reason at all to *Apologize* for it, because I am fully persuaded of the *truth* of it, yet being forced, as I was, to compose it by *snatches*, and in the more *quiet* intervals of a *busie* and *uneasie* life, I very much suspect the *exactness* both of the *Stile* and *Method* of it; and therefore all the favour I desire is this, that where I have *improperly* or *obscurely* express'd my self, I may be construed in the most *favourable* sense, and that wherever I may seem to be *confused* or *immetbodical*, it may be attributed to those frequent *interruptions* which the *disorders* of my *body* have given to my *thoughts*. And these are requests so very *just* and *reasonable*, that I am confident none will be so *peevish* as to deny me, but they who read Books only

to

The Preface.

to *carp* and *find fault*, and without any design to *Edifie* their own understandings. But I hope the *Reader* will consider that the *Argument* here treated of is of too great moment to him to be so wretchedly *trifled* with, and that therefore he will not be either so *disingenuous* to me, or *uncharitable* to himself, as to peruse with such a *spiteful* design that which I *sincerely* intended for his good, and which he, I am sure, if he pleases, may be the *better* for *for ever*.

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OF THE

Christian Life.

PART II. VOL. I.

CHAP. I.

*Concerning the Being, and Nature of
Moral Goodness.*

ALL Humane Actions are either Necessary, or Sinful, or Indifferent. The *Necessary* are such as are *commanded*, the *Sinful* such as are *forbidden* by God, the *Indifferent* such as are neither commanded nor forbidden, but left entirely free to our Choice and Discretion. Again, the necessary and the sinful actions are either such as are necessary and sinful *in themselves*, and are commanded and forbidden upon the account of some Good and Evil that is *inseparable* to their Natures; or such as are *indifferent* in their own Natures, as to any good or evil *inherent* in them, but are made necessary or sinful by some *positive* Command or Prohibition superinduc'd upon them. Of the first sort are those which we call *Moral* Actions; as being the subject matter of the Moral Law, which commands, and forbids nothing but

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what is *essentially* and *immutably* good and evil; and whilst there was no other Law but this, every Action which did not oblige by some *eternal Reason*, or which is the same, by some *inseparable* good or evil, was left *free* and *indifferent*. But in process of time God superadded to this *Moral* Law a great many *Positive* ones, whereby he obliged men to do, and forbear sundry of those *indifferent* things, which were left to their liberty by the Law of *Nature*. For such we call the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Mosaick Law*; all which were *indifferent* before they were *imposed*, and as soon as ever the *Imposition* was taken off from them, did immediately return to their Primitive *Indifferency*: so that by the abolition of their *Ceremonial* Law, the *Jews* were restored to all the Liberties of the *Moral*; excepting only the matter of the two *Sacraments*, and of maintaining a *visible Communion* with the Church, which are determined by positive Laws of Christianity. And of this later sort of necessary and sinful Actions, are, not only all those indifferent ones which God himself has commanded and forbidden *immediately*, but also all those which he commands and forbids by his *Viceroy*s and *Representatives*, in this World. For whatsoever he hath not commanded or forbidden by *his own immediate* Dictate and Authority, he hath Authorized his Vicegerents to command or forbid, as *they* shall judge it most expedient for the Publick. So that when they command what God hath not forbidden, or forbid what he hath not commanded, *their will* is *God's*, who commands us by their Mouths, and stamps their *Injunctions* with his own Authority.

And

And of this distinction between actions that are *morally* and *positively* Necessary the Scripture frequently takes notice, and particularly, *Mich. vi. 6, 7, 8. Wherewithall shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the high God? shall I come before him with Burnt Offerings, with Calves of a year old, &c.* No, these are not the things that will render me acceptable in his Eyes, and procure me a welcome Admission into his Presence; and yet it is certain that these things were then *required* and *commanded*, and therefore were *positively* necessary; but that they were not necessary *in themselves* upon the account of any *intrinsic* Goodness that was in them, is evident from what follows, *He hath shewed thee O Man what is good;* as much as if he should have said, the things above named are in their *own* nature indifferent, having neither good nor evil in themselves; and are *made* necessary merely by *positive* Command, upon which account they are insufficient to recommend you to God: but there are other things that carry an *intrinsic* Beauty and Goodness in their Nature by which they strictly oblige you to imbrace and practise them, and do there-upon recommend you by their own *native* Charms, to the Love and Favour of God; and what these good things are he hath sufficiently shewn or discovered to you, *viz. To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God,* which are the main and principal Duties that he *requires* of you. Which plainly implies that there are some Actions which are *morally*, that is, in their own Natures, *eternally* good, and therefore eternally necessary, and some that are necessary only because

for *some* present Reason God Wills and Commands them. For no account can be given why he would be more pleased with *Justice* and *Mercy* and *Humanity*, than with *Sacrifice*, unless we suppose the former to be good, and therefore necessary upon *immutable* Reasons, and upon that account to be immutably pleasing to him; and the latter to be necessary only upon *mutable* reasons, which therefore were to lose their Necessity as soon as those reasons did alter and cease. For had Sacrifices been good in their *own* Natures, their goodness had been as *unalterable* as their Nature; whereas, on the contrary we find, that whereas their *Nature* neither is nor can be altered, yet their *Goodness* or *Necessity* is. For as before God adopted them into the Rubrick of Religion by his own positive Institution, they were *indifferent* things; so after this Institution was repealed by a contrary Command, they became *unlawful*. So that it is *now* as necessary that we should *not* Offer them in the Worship of God, as it was *before* that we should. And the same may be said of all the other Rights of the *Mosaick* Law: which being in their own Nature Indifferent, could no otherwise be converted either into Necessary or Sinful, but by G O D's express Command or Prohibition. Whereas *Justice* and *Mercy*, &c. are good in themselves *abstractly* considered from all Will and Command; and are not good merely because they are *Commanded*, but are commanded because they are *good*; because they carry with them such *unalterable* Reasons as do in themselves render the practice of them eternally necessary. For though there be very good reason why men should not
offer

offer material Sacrifices, notwithstanding they were once enjoined; yet it can *never* be reasonable for them to be *unjust* or *cruel* or *proud*, because the contrary Vertues carry such *fixed* and *immutable* Reasons with them as will bind and oblige us to Eternity; infomuch that though we had a Dispensation to be proud under the Broad-Seal of Heaven, yet 'twould still be very *absurd* and *unreasonable* to be so. And as things that are only *positively* necessary or sinful, derive all their necessity and sinfulness from God's *direct* or *express* Command and Prohibition; so they cannot be commanded or forbidden by *Consequence*. For if the Matter of them be *antecedently* Lawful or Indifferent, it must necessarily remain so till it be *directly* commanded or forbidden; there being no other Reason to bound and limit it, but only the Will of the Law-giver in whose disposal it is; and therefore till he *directly* signifies his Will either for or against it, it must remain as it is, *i. e.* *Free* and *Indifferent*. But you will say, Suppose God hath commanded *such* an indifferent thing for *such* a Reason, doth it not thence follow that he thereby commands every *other* indifferent thing that hath the same reason for it? I answer, No; for if the Reason why he commands it be *necessary* and *eternal*, it is not a thing *indifferent*, but *morally* necessary, and so is every thing else that hath the *same* Reason for it: and consequently the reason of the Law, though it be applied but to one thing, extends to every thing of the same Nature; because in all moral Cases the *Reason* of the Law is the *Law*. But if the thing commanded be in it self *indifferent*, the Reason why it is commanded cannot be *ne-*

cessary; and therefore though there be the same *Reason* why another thing of the same Nature should be commanded, yet it doth not necessarily oblige unless it be commanded *actually*, because in such cases it is not the *Reason* but the *Authority* of the Law that obliges: and therefore where there is only the Reason and not the Law, it lays no obligation to the Conscience.

From the whole therefore it is evident what is the difference between things that are *positively* and morally Necessary and Sinful; which I thought very necessary to explain at large, for the giving a fuller light to the ensuing Discourse; in which I shall endeavour to shew,

First, That there is such an *intrinsic* Goodness in some *Humane* Actions, as renders them for ever *necessary* and *obliging* to us.

Secondly, That God hath sufficiently discovered to us what those *Humane* Actions are, which carry with them this *perpetual* Obligation.

Thirdly, That these Actions which carry with them this perpetual Obligation, are the main and *principal* parts of Religion.

S E C T. I.

That there is such an Intrinsick Good in some Humane Actions as render them for ever necessary and obliging to us.

GOOD is twofold, *Absolute* or *Respective*, or the Good of the *End* and the Good of the *Means*. The Good of the End is that which is the Perfection and Happiness of any Being; the good of the Means is that which tends and conduces thereunto. As for instance, the *absolute* Good of a Brute Animal consists in the Perfection and Satisfaction of its Sense, or in having perfect Feeling and Sensation of such things as are most grateful to its Appetite and Senses. Its *respective* good is the Means by which its Senses are perfected or rendred lively and vigorous, and by which it's provided for with such things as are grateful and pleasing to them. For there being in every *animate* nature a Principle whereby it's necessarily inclined to promote its own preservation and Well being, that which hath in it a fitness to promote this End is called *Good*, as on the contrary that which is apt to hinder it *Evil*. Now Man being not only a *sensitive* but a *rational* Creature, hath a twofold Good belonging to his Nature, the first Sensitive which is the same with that of brute Animals, consisting in the Perfection and Satisfaction of his bodily Senses and Appetites, and in those means which conduce thereunto; and this for distinction sake is called his *Natural* Good;

Good ; the second Rational, which consists in the Perfection and Satisfaction of his Rational Faculties, and in those means which tend thereunto ; and this is stiled his *Moral Good*, though in reality 'tis as much *Natural* as the former. For Man being naturally as well Rational as Sensitive, that which promotes his Rational Perfection and Happiness, is no less *naturally* good for him than that which promotes his Sensitive: Nay his Rational Nature being the much more *noble* and *excellent* part of him, that which naturally promotes the Perfection and Happiness of it, is in it self a much *greater* good to his Nature, and ought to be preferred by him before any of those Natural goods, which conduce only to the happiness of his sensitive Nature ; and he who indulges his *sensitive* Part in any Pleasure which his Rational disallows, doth thereby create a torment to himself, and raise a Devil in his own mind. For though Reason and Religion doth allow that the Sensitive nature should be gratified in all its natural Appetites and Desires, yet neither allow that it should be pampered and indulged in any such Excesses as are prejudicial either to it self or to that Rational Nature whereunto it is joined ; and he who indulges his Sense in any such Excesses, renders himself obnoxious to his own Reason, and to gratifie the *Brute* in him displeases the *Man*, and sets his two Natures at variance. So that there is nothing can be *naturally* good for us, that is any way inconsistent with what is *morally* so, *i. e.* with what conduces to the Perfection and Happiness, of our rational Nature ; and though this Natural and Moral Good are no way inconsistent with one another, yet it

is

is the Moral that is the Supreme Good of a Man, because it is the Good of his most excellent Nature. Having thus premised what I mean by *Good* in general, and particularly by *Moral Good*, I proceed to shew that in some Humane actions there is such an *intrinsic moral Good* as renders 'em for ever obliging to us. And this I shall endeavour in these following Propositions.

First, That the Happiness of Humane Nature is founded in his *Perfection*.

Secondly, That the Perfection of Humane Nature consists in acting suitably to the most *perfect Reason*.

Thirdly, That the most perfect Reason is that wherein all reasonable Beings do *consent* and *agree*.

Fourthly, That there are certain Rules of Moral Good, wherein all Reasonable Beings are *agreed*.

Fifthly, That to act suitably to those Rules hath been always found by universal experience *conducible* to the Happiness of Humane Nature, and the contrary *mischievous* thereunto.

I. That the Happiness of Humane Nature is founded in its *Perfection*. For the Perfection of Beings consists in their being *completely* disposed and adapted for the End whereunto they are designed. Now the End of all Beings that have Life and Sense, is that sort of Happiness that is suitable to their Natures; for 'tis thither that they all of them naturally tend, and therein that their Faculties do all concenter. When therefore their Faculties or Powers of Action are completely disposed to enjoy the proper Happiness of their Natures,

tures, then are they perfect in their Kind. Thus for instance, The End of Brutes which have only Bodily Sense, is *sensitive* and *corporeal* Happiness; and therefore then is the Brute Creature perfect in its kind, when it hath not only all the Parts and Senses that are necessary to procure and enjoy its Happiness, but hath them also *perfectly* fitted, tempered, and qualified to pursue and relish it. And supposing that all the pleasure or happiness of a Beast consisted in the Taste and Smell of its Pasture, it could never be compleatly happy so long as the Organs of its Smell or Taste were imperfect. So that the perfection of every Sensible Nature consists in being perfectly disposed to enjoy its Natural Happiness. And accordingly herein consists the Perfection of Humane Nature, in being perfectly fitted and disposed to enjoy and relish Humane Happiness. For this being its proper End, it is impossible it should ever be perfect in its Kind till 'tis compleatly contempered and adapted thereunto. So that our Happiness must necessarily be founded in our *Perfection*, which is nothing else but the perfect Disposition of our Natures to relish and enjoy those Goods wherein the Happiness of our Nature consists; and till our Nature is perfectly disposed to enjoy them, all the good things of Heaven and Earth will be insufficient to render us perfectly happy.

II. That the perfection of Humane Nature consists in acting suitably to the most *Perfect Reason*. For Reason being the top and Crown of Humane Nature, hath a natural Right to *Command* and *Dispose* of its Motions; to be the Eye of its Will, and the Guide, of its Affections, and the

Law

Law of all its Powers of Action. And indeed, for what other use serves the Reason of a Man, but to prescribe Rules to his unreasonable Affections, to *light* and *direct* them in their proper Objects, and as they are moving towards them, to *moderate* their Excesses and to *quicken* their Defects, and to lead them on to true Happiness in an even Course through all the wild Mazes of popular Mistake? And unless it be thus employed, the Man is Reasonable *in vain*, and his light, like a Candle inclosed in a Dark-Lanthorn, burns out in wast and spends it self in an useless and unprofitable blaze. And whilst to please our Appetites and Passions we run counter to the advice of our Reason, we forsake the rule of our Natures and act like Beasts and not like Men; in which course of Action if we persist, we must necessarily *degenerate* from our selves, and *sink* by degrees into the most sordid Brutality. For when once our Appetites have gotten the Command of our Reason, and not only *dethroned* but *enslaved* it, the very order of our Nature is *transported* and we are become our own *Reverse* and *Antipodes*. If therefore we would arrive at our own Perfection, it must be by following our Reason, and submitting all our Affections and Appetites to its Government. For what else can be the Perfection of a Rational Nature, but to be perfectly Rational; and what³ is it to be perfectly Rational, but to have our Minds thoroughly *instructed* with the Principles of Right Reason, and our Will and Affections intirely *regulated* by them? For herein consists the Supreme Perfection not only of Men, but of Angels, yea and of God himself, the

Crown,

Crown and Glory of whose Nature it is, that he always *knows*, and *chuses* and *acts* what is *fittest* and *best* and *most reasonable*. And when once our Understanding is so far *inlignited* as that it always *dictates* right Reason to us; and our Will and Affections are so far *subdued* as that they always freely and chearfully *comply* with it, we have arrived to the very top of our Nature, and are Commenced Perfect Men in Christ Jesus.

III. That the most Perfect Reason is that wherein all Reasonable Beings do *consent* and *agree*: For if there be any such matter as *True* and *False*, *Reasonable* and *Unreasonable*, in the Nature of things, and if there be any such thing as *Understanding* among Beings, whereby they are capable of distinguishing between the *one* and the *other*; either that must be *True* and *Reasonable* which all Understandings do *consent* and *agree* in, or all the Understandings that are in the World must be under a fatal *Cheat* and *Delusion*. Which latter being supposed, inevitably destroys all *Knowledge* and *Certainty*, and lays a foundation for the wildest *Scepticism*. For supposing all Understandings to be *deceived* and *imposed* on, it is impossible for us to be *certain* of any thing, and for all we know, a Part may be bigger than the Whole, two and two may make twenty, and both parts of a Contradiction may be true. Nay we can never be certain whether we are not Dreaming when we think we are Awake, and whether we are not Awake when we think we are Dreaming. Either therefore we must *renounce* all Certainty whatsoever, and *fluctuate* in eternal Scepticism, or *allow* that to be *True* and *Reasonable* which all Understandings do unanimously vote so.

IV. That

IV. That there are certain Rules of Moral Goodness concerning the immutable Reason whereof all Understandings are *agreed*. For such are all those which perscribe the Dueness of *Worship* and *Veneration* to God, of *Obedience* and *Loyalty* to our Parents and Superiours, of *Temperance* and *Fortitude* to our selves, and of *Justice* and *Charity* to one another; to the Goodness and Reasonableness of which Rules, all Understandings do as unanimously *confer*, as to the truth of any Proposition in the Mathematicks. Now of all the Orders of Reasonable Beings, that which we most *converse* with, and with whole Consent and Agreement in any matters we are best *acquainted*, is that of *Men*; and therefore if among Men we can discover such an Universal *Agreement* concerning the Goodness of these Rules as will warrant us to conclude all other Rational Beings to be *consenting* with them, this will be a sufficient Demonstration of the Truth of the Proposition. These two things therefore I shall endeavour to make out, 1. That the Reason of Men is *Universally* consenting in this matter, *viz.* That there is an *immutable* Goodness in these Rules of Morality. 2. That this Universal Consent of *Mens* Reason in this matter is a sufficient Demonstration that all *other* reasonable Beings are consenting with them.

First, Therefore there is nothing more evident than that *Men* are Universally agreed in this matter, that to *Worship* God, to *Honour* their Parents and Superiours, to be *temperate* in their Passions and Appetites, and *just* and *charitable* towards one another, are things in their own nature *immutably* good: that this is not an Opinion peculiar

liar to such an *Age*, or to such a *Nation*, or to such a *Sett* of Religion, but the *Universal* Judgment of all Mankind of whatsoever *Age*, *Nation*, or *Religion*. For 'tis upon this Judgment that all that *Conscience* is founded which approves of or condemns men's actions ; which Conscience is nothing else but a Sense or Feeling of Moral Good and Evil ; and is every whit as natural to Mens minds, as the Sense of pleasant or painful touches to their Bodies. Since therefore general *Effects* must spring from general *Causes*, it necessarily follows that *that Pain and Pleasure* which Mens minds generally feel upon the Commission of *bad and good* Actions, must be resolved into some general Cause ; and what else can that be, but the general *Consent* of their Reason concerning the immutable Evil of the *one* and Good of the *other* ? I know 'tis pretended by some of our Modern Navigators that there are a sort of People in the World who have not the least Sense of Good and Evil, and do own neither *God* nor *Religion* nor *Morality*. But considering the short Converse and imperfect Intercourse which these our new discoverers have had with those Barbarous Countries, it is fairly supposed that the inhabitants may have *Notions* both *Religious*, and *Moral*, of which Strangers who understand not their Language and Customs and Manners, can make little or no Discovery. But suppose that what they report were true ; yet by their own confession these wretched *Barbarians* are in all other things so extremely Brutish, that they discover no other token of their Humanity but their Shape. For they live altogether *regardless* of themselves ; of the

Conve-

Conveniences of their Lives, and of the *Dignity* of their Natures; without making any *Reflections* on their own minds, or any *Observations* from their own experience. Since therefore all Knowledge is acquired by Attention, it is not at all impossible for Creatures so utterly *supine* and *negligent* to be ignorant of the most common Notions. But for any man to question the truth of this *general* Rule, because there are a few *Exceptions* from it, is every whit as absurd as if he should question whether men are generally *two legg'd* Animals, because there have been some Monsters with three. And what if among Men there are some Monsters in respect of their *Minds*, as well as others in respect of their *Bodies*; This is no more a prejudice to the standing Laws of *Humane* Nature, than *Prodigies* are to the Regularity of the constant course of *Universal* Nature. *Specimen naturæ cujuslibet*, saith Tully, *a natura optima sumendum est*, i. e. *The true sample of every Nature is to be taken from the best Natures of the kind.* Since therefore the men of all Nations and Ages and Religions who have in any measure attended to the Nature of things, and made but any tolerable use of their Reasons, are, and always have been *universally* agreed that there is an immutable Good in Vertue, and Evil in Vice; it is no Argument at all that this is not the *general Sense* of Mankind, supposing it *true*, which is very *questionable*, that there are some few such inhumane Barbarians in the World as make no distinction at all between'em. But then

Secondly, This Universal consent of *Mens* Reason in this matter, is a sufficient Demonstration that

that all *other* Reasonable Beings are consenting with them. For it shews that God himself is of this mind; and if *He* be, we may be sure that all *other* Reasonable Beings are. For if we believe that God made us, we must believe that he made us for some *End*; and if he made us for any *End*, he must esteem those Actions *good* which *promote* it, and those *evil* which *obstruct* and *hinder* it. And what other *End* can an infinitely happy and blessed Being have in making other Beings; but only to do 'em good, and according to their several Capacities to make them partakers of his own happiness? And if this be the end for which God made us, to be sure those Actions must be *good* in his esteem that are *beneficial*, and those *evil* that are *hurtful* and *mischievous* to our Nature. And therefore since he hath implanted in us not only a natural *Desire* of Happiness; but also a rational *Faculty* to discern what Actions make for our Happiness, and what not, we may be sure that whatsoever this Faculty doth *Universally* determine to be good or evil for us, is good or evil in the Judgment of God. 'Tis true, when the Reason that is in *one* man judges contrary to the Reason that is in *another*, there must be a *Disagreement* on one side or the other from the Reason and Judgment of God: but when *all* mens Reason is agreed that *this* is good and *that* evil, it is plain that this is the Judgment of the Rational Faculty which *naturally* makes such a *Distinction* of things. For there is no man that uses his Reason can possibly think that *Truth* and *Falshood*, *Justice* and *Injustice*, *Mercy* and *Cruelty* are equally *good* in themselves; his Rational Faculty

only being so framed as that at the first glance and reflection, it naturally *distinguishes* 'em into *Good* and *Evil*. When therefore God hath created us with such a *Faculty* as naturally makes such a *Judgment* of Good and Evil, that *Judgment* must be God's, as well as the *Faculty* which made it. That therefore which is the *unanimous Judgment* of all men, must be the *natural Language* of the Rational Faculty; and that which is the natural Language of the Rational Faculty must be the Language of the *God of Nature*. For he who created me with such a *Faculty* as naturally judges *this* Good and *that* Evil, must either have the same Judgment *himself*, or create in me a Contradiction to his *own* Judgment; and that Judgment which he hath created in *me*, he must be supposed to create in *all other* Beings that are capable of Judging; otherwise he would be the Author of *Contradictory* Judgments. For, should one Rational Faculty naturally judge *this*, and another the *contrary*, they must necessarily be so framed as to *contradict* each other, and consequently he who framed both must be the Author of the Contradiction. So that this *universal Consent* of Men concerning the *Good* and *Evil* of Humane Actions is a plain Evidence that God and all other Rational Beings are *consenting* with 'em.

V. And lastly, that Mens acting *conformably* to these Rules of Moral Goodness, in which they are thus *universally consenting*, hath by long and constant Experience been found most *conducive* to Mens Welfare and Happiness. For the Proof whereof I shall need urge no other Argument than this, That the great *Design* of all Humane

Laws and Constitutions hath been to *secure* and enforce these Rules of *Morality*; which is a plain Argument that Men have always found by *Experience* that they are naturally good and productive of their Happiness and Welfare. For how can it be thought that after men have had so many thousand years *Trial* of Piety and Justice and Mercy and Temperance, they should still be so solicitous to *fence* and *guard* 'em with Laws, had they not found 'em highly *advantageous*, and their Contraries as *Mischievous* to Mankind. For do but suppose that the contraries to all Vertue were for *Experiment*-sake imposed for some time upon Mankind, and it were made as Penal by the Laws of Nations to be *Pious*, and *Just*, *Merciful*, and *Temperate* as it is now to be the contrary; is it imaginable that that which we now call *Vice* should in process of time acquire the same Universal *Reputation* that *Vertue* hath always had among men? Or at least, is it probable that after some *thousand* years Trial and Experience of *such* a Law, Men should still be as much concerned to guard and enforce it, as they are and always have been to secure the Law of Piety and Virtue? No, it is most certain they would not. For the very injoyning of *Impiety*, *Injustice*, and *Cruelty* would be in effect to injoyn men to render themselves most *wretched* and *miserable*: to surrender up all the *Supports* of their Hope, the *Peace* of their Consciences and the *Tranquility* of their Minds; to live in everlasting *Broils* and *Discords*, then turn *Robbers* and *Cut-throats* to one another, and utterly deprive themselves of all the *Comforts* and *Securities* of Humane Societies.

So that there is no doubt but after a few years of Experience of the mischievous Consequents of such a Law, the whole World would groan under it as an insupportable Tyranny, and even the most *Vicious* would soon grow quite weary of it, and heartily wish that it were for ever *Repealed*, and the good old Laws of Piety and Virtue restored and *inforc'd* upon Mankind. And if so, it is plain that Virtue and Vice are distinguished by their *Natures* into good and evil; and that the Obligation we lie under to *practise* the one, and *abstain* from the other, are not founded in any *Arbitrary* Constitution, but in the *essential* Goodness and Malignity that inseparably adheres to them.

And if we consult the Experience of *particular* Men, we shall always find, that whereas *Impiety* and *Injustice*, *Fraud* and *Malice* do naturally torment mens Minds with Anguish and Confusion, haunt their Breasts with fearful Thoughts and dire Expectations, *harrafs* their Souls with perpetual Male contentedness, and *intricate* their whole Lives with everlasting Shifts and Intrigues; *Piety* and *Justice*, *Truth* and *Benevolence* do as naturally sooth and ravish their Minds, fill 'em with *blessed* Hopes and *cheerful* Reflections; *compose* their Passions, *strengthen* and *invigorate* their Hearts, and render the whole Courie of their Lives *plain* and *direct*, *even* and *easy*. And hereby Vertue doth sensibly recommend it self to our Natures in all its Capacities, as being fited to the Satisfaction of all its reasonable Desires, and so by consequence designed to make up the *completest* and most *intire* Enjoyment. All which is

as plain and obvious to the Reason of Mankind as any Matter of Fact that is before us. So that 'tis not only the *Reason*, but also the *Experience* of Mankind that universally *agrees* and *consents* in this great Truth, that there is such a Good in *Virtuous* and such an Evil in *Vicious* Actions, as doth *eternally* and *inseparably* cleave to their *Natures*.

And therefore since our Nature is to continue the same for ever; the same *Virtues* and *Vices* which are now the *Perfection* and *Depravation*, and consequently the *Happiness* and *Misery* of it, will be so *for ever*. From whence it necessarily follows, that our eternal *Happiness* and *Misery* is founded in the Course of our own Actions. So that as in the Course of a *virtuous* Life we are growing up into a State of *fixed* and *everlasting* Vertue wherein we shall be everlastingly *Perfect* and *Happy*; so on the contrary, in a course of *vicious* Actions we are sinking into a state of *everlasting* Viciousness, wherein we shall be everlastingly *wretched* and *miserable*. For since Virtue is *good* for, and Vice *evil* to us in its own Nature, it necessarily follows that according as we remain *Virtuous* or *Vicious* for ever, our Condition must be *good* or *evil* for ever. And this being so, of what unspeakable Consequence are the Actions of Men, that thus draw after 'em a Chain of *Joys* or *Wees* as long as Eternity! And how careful ought we to be, to what course of Life we determine our selves, considering that our *eternal* Fate depends upon what we are now doing: that every Moral Action we perform is a step *Heaven* or *Hellwards*; that in every bad or good Choice we make,

we are planting our *Tophet* or our *Paradise*; and that in the Consequents of our present Actions we shall *rue* or *rejoyce* to eternal Ages; O would to God men would at last be so wise as to consider these things before it be too late, and not live at Random as they do, without any Regard to the certain and unavoidable Fate of their own Actions! For doubtless would they but thoroughly weigh the *Nature* and *Event* of things, and look before they leap into Action, they would see infinitely more *Charm* and *Terror* in that *Good* and *Evil* which inseparably adheres to virtuous and vicious Actions, than in all the Temptations in the World. Wherefore in the name of God let us look about us, and for once resolve to act like Beings that must for ever feel the *bad* or *good* effects of our own Doings. Which if we do, we shall not only live well and happily here, but to all Eternity experience the blessed Consequents of it.

S E C T. II.

That God hath sufficiently discovered to us what those Humane Actions are, which are Morally Good, and upon that account perpetually obliging.

THE Truth of which will evidently appear by considering the Particulars, what it is that God hath done in order to the making this

great *Discovery* to us; the most considerable of which are reducible to these six Heads:

First, He hath implanted in us a natural *Desire* of Happiness.

Secondly, He hath given us Reason to *discern* what Actions they are that make for our Happiness, and what not.

Thirdly, He hath so contrived our Natures as that we are thrust on by our own *Instincts* and *Passions*, to those Actions which make for our Happiness.

Fourthly, He hath taken care to excite and oblige us to those Actions, by annexing natural *Rewards* to them and entailing natural *Punishments* on their Contraries.

Fifthly, To strengthen and inforce this Obligation, he hath frequently superadded to these natural Rewards and Punishments *Supernatural Blessings* and *Judgments*.

Sixthly, That to inforce all this, he hath made sundry supernatural *Revelations*, wherein he hath plainly told us what those things are that carry with 'em this intrinsick Good and Necessity.

I. God hath taken care to discover to us what is Morally Good by implanting in us a natural *Desire* of Happiness, which is so inseparable to Humane nature, and 'tis impossible for us to forbear desiring what is good for us, or at least what appears so. For tho' through our own Ignorance and Inconsideration we many times mistake *Evil* for *Good*, and *Misery* for *Happiness*, yet such is the Frame of our Nature, that we cannot desire Evil as Evil, or Misery as Misery; but whensoever we imbrace a real Evil, 'tis either under the

Notion

Notion of a *less* Evil, or of a *real* and *substantial* Good. Now by this unquenchable *Thirst* and *Desire* of Happiness which God hath implanted in our Nature, we are continually *importuned* and *excited* to search out and enquire by what Ways and Means we may arrive to be happy. So that as *Hunger* and *Thirst* and the sense of bodily *Pain* and *Pleasure* forceth men upon the invention of *Trades* and *Civil Occupations* to supply their necessities and Conveniences: So this vehement Hunger and Thirst after Happiness, which God hath created in our Bosoms, doth almost *necessitate* and *constrain* us to pry into the Nature of our Actions; that so we may discover what Trade and Course of life it is that tends most directly to our own Felicity. And by thus *importuning* us by our own *self-love* to enquire into the Nature of our Actions and into their natural tendencies to our Weal or Woe, he hath not only expressed his good Will towards us by taking *Security* of our selves for our own Welfare, and obliging us to be happy by the most *tender* and *vigorous* Passion in our Natures, but hath also taken an effectual Course to discover to us the Good and Evil of our own Actions; Considering,

II. That he hath given us Reason to *discern* what Actions they are that make for our Happiness and what not. 'Tis true, had he only implanted in our Breasts a *blind* Desire of Happiness, without any Eye of Reason in our Heads to *guide* and *direct* our Actions towards it, we must have wandered in the dark for ever, till we had pined away our wretched Beings with a *hungry* and *unsatisfied* Desire. But by giving us a *quick-sighted*

Faculty of Reason to *guide* and *conduct* this our blind Desire, he hath taken sufficient care not only to *excite* our Enquiry after the Way to Happiness, but also to *enable* us to find it. For the natural tendencies of our Actions to our Happiness or Misery are so very *obvious* and *visible*, that we can scarce open our Eyes and look abroad without *observing* them. For how can any man who makes any observations upon things, be so stupid as not to *discern* the vast difference there is between *Truth* and *Falshood*, *Justice* and *Injustice*, as to their natural tendency to the *Good* and *Hurt*, *Happiness* and *Misery* of Mankind? 'Tis true, if men will neglect *using* their Reason, they may be ignorant of the *plainest* Propositions; but if they be, 'tis their *inexcusable* Folly. But if men will be so true to their own Interest, as calmly to *reflect* upon their Actions, their Sense cannot more readily distinguish between *Honey* and *Gall*, than their Reason will between *Virtue* and *Vice*; the fundamental Reasons of which are so *legible* in all the Appearances of Nature, so *necessary* to the Being and Preservation of Mankind, and their equity is so *apparent*, and their Convenience so *obvious*, that a man can hardly reflect upon any thing either *within* or *without* him, without being convinced of their Force and Obligation. So that for a man that hath the use of his Reason not to observe the Difference of his Actions, as to their *intrinsic* Good and Evil, and necessary Tendency to his Happiness and Misery, would be as *gross* and *unexcusable* a Stupidity, as if he should pass through the World without ever taking notice that two and two makes four. God therefore by giving

us a reasonable Faculty to *discern* the nature of things, upon which the Differences of Good and Evil are so *plainly* and *legibly* imprinted, hath hereby taken sufficient Care to shew us the difference of our own Actions. For, to inspire us with a Faculty of *Reasoning*, by which we can *form* true Notions of things from single Experiments, and *infer* one truth from another, and *immediately* to inspire this Faculty with *Divine Truth*, are only two different Modes of *Divine Revelation*; and God did as *really* reveal himself to us when he *gave* us Reason to understand his Will, and when he *sent* to us his Messengers from Heaven to make known his Mind and Will to us. For God hath so framed our Understandings, as that whensoever we impartially reason about things, we are *forced* to distinguish between Good and Evil, and cannot persuade our selves without doing infinite *Violence* to our own Faculties, that to *Blaspheme* God or to *Reverence* him, *lye* or *speak Truth*, to *honour* our Parents, or to *scorn* and *despise* them, are things of an indifferent Nature; but as soon as ever we open the Eye of our Reason, we discern such an *essential* Difference between them, as forces us to *condemn* the one and *approve* the other. And accordingly as for the greatest strokes of Iniquity, we find they have as much the Universal Judgment of our Reason against them as any *false Conclusion* in the Mathematicks; whilst the Goodness of their contrary Vertues is as universally acknowledged by us as the Truth of any *first Principle* in Philosophy. Since therefore God hath so framed our Understanding as that it cannot calmly reflect upon our Actions without distinguishing between the

the *good* and *bad*, he hath hereby sufficiently *revealed* to us what that good is that *immutably* binds and obliges us.

III. God hath so contrived our Natures, as that we are thrust on by our own *Instincts* and *Passions* to those Actions which are morally Good and do make for our Happiness. For we are framed and constituted with such Passions and Affections as do naturally *point* and *direct* us unto vertuous Actions; and tho by the Constitution of our Natures, our Passions are Subjected to our Reason and all our Vertue consists in being *reasonably affected*, yet in the very Nature of our passions there is a certain *Tendency* and *Direction* to Vertue, antecedent to all our *Reasoning* and *Discourse*. Which *Theagnes* the *Pythagorean* styles Παρόρμησις καὶ ἐνθουσιασμός τὰς καὶ φύσιν ἀπειτὰς, a certain natural *Impetus* or *Enthusiasm*, by which without any previous *Discourse* or *Deliberation* we are forcibly carried on towards vertuous Actions. For some Affections there are in our Nature, which do in the general plainly signify to us that there is such a thing as Moral Good and Evil in Humane Actions; and others that do plainly point out *what* those Actions are wherein this moral good and evil is subjected. Of the first sort are the Affections of Love and Hatred, Complacency and Horror, Glory and Shame, Repentance and Self-satisfaction; which plainly declare that there are *answerable* Objects in the Nature of Things and Actions; that there is a Good to be *beloved* and an Evil to be *bated*, a Deformity to be *abhorred*, and a Beauty to be *delighted* in; an Excellency to be *gloried* in, and a Filthiness to be *ashamed*

ashamed of ; a Well-doing to be *satisfied with*, and an Ill doing to be *repented of*. For if there were no such real Distinctions in the Nature of Things and Actions, all these Affections in us would be utterly *vain* and *impertinent*. And as these Affections of our Nature do signify in the *general* that there is a Moral Good and Evil in our Actions, so there are others which do *particularly* point out *what* Actions are morally Good and what Evil. Thus for Instance, the Passions of *Veneration* and *Disdain* do plainly direct us to Honour God and our Superiours, and to be constant in good Courses out of a generous *Scorn* of all Temptations to the contrary. Thus *Commiseration* and *Envy* direct us to Charity and Justice, to *lament* and *assist* those who are *undeservedly* unfortunate, and to be *displeased* with the Advancement of *base* and *undeserving* People ; and consequently to be *just* and *equal* in our Distributions, and to *proportion* them to mens Merit and Desert. For by this Passion of Envy, Nature teaches us that there is such a thing as *just* and *unjust*, *equal* and *unequal*, and that the former is to be *embraced*, and the latter to be *shunned*. And to name no more, thus *Sorrow* and *Joy* do by silent Language dissuade us from *injuring*, and perswade us to *benefit* one another. For so by the mournful Voice, the dejected Eyes and Countenance, the Sighs and groans and Tears of the *sorrowful* and *oppressed*, (all which are the powerful Rhetorick of Nature) we are importuned not only to *forbear* heaping any further Injuries upon them, but also to *commiserate* their Grievs, and by our timely Aids to *succour* and *relieve* them.

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As on the contrary the florid and chearful Looks, the pleasant and grateful Air which we behold in those that *rejoyce*, are so many Charms and Attractives by which Nature allures us to mutual *Urbanity* and *Sweetness* of Behaviour, and a continually Study to *please* and *gratify* one another. By these and many other Instances I might give, it is evident that though by our own ill Government we too often *deprave* our Affections and *corrupt* them into Vices, yet their *natural* Drift and tendency lies towards Vertue. Thus by their own natural Light which they carry before us, they *direct* our steps to the Way we are to walk in, and point out all those Tracts of eternal Goodness that lead to our Happiness. For since these Affections are in us antecedently to all our Deliberations and Choices, it is evident they were placed there by the *Author* of our Natures; and therefore since 'tis *He* who hath inclined them to all that they naturally incline to, *He* doth in Effect direct and guide us by *their* Inclinations. So that *their* natural Tendencies and Directions are the *Voice of God* in our natures, which *murmurs* and *whispers* to us that natural Law which our Reason indeed doth more *plainly* and *articulately* promulge. And from this natural Tendency of our Affections to Good, proceeds that *pleasant* and *painful* Sense of *good* and *bad* Actions, which we experience in our selves before ever we can discourse. For thus before we are capable of reasoning our selves into any Pleasure or Displeasure, our Nature is *rejoyced* in a kind of just Action either in our selves or others, and we are sensibly *pleased* when we have pleased those that oblige us, and

and as sensibly *grieved* when we are conscious of having *grieved* and *offended* them. We *love* to see those fare well who we imagine have deserved well; and when any unjust Violence is offered them, our Nature *shrinks at*, and *abhors* it. We *pity* and *compassionate* the miserable when we know not *why*; and are ready to offer at their Relief when we can give no Reason for it; which shews that these things proceed not either from our *Education* or deliberate *Choice*, but from the Nature of our Affections which have a *Sympathy* with Vertue, and an *Antipathy* to Vice implanted in our very Constitution. And hence it is that in the Beginnings of Sin our Nature is commonly so *shy* of an evil Action; that it approaches it with such a modest *Coyness*, and goes *blushing* to it like a bashful Virgin to an Adulterers Bed; that it passes into it with such *Regret* and *Reluctancy*, and looks back upon it with such *Shame* and *Confusion*; which in our tender years, when as yet we are not arrived to the Exercise of our Understandings, cannot be supposed to proceed from *Reason* and *Conscience*, and therefore must be from the *natural* Sense of our Affections, which by these and such like Indications do signify that they are *violated* and *offended*. Now this natural Sense of Good and Evil which springs from the *Frame* and *Nature* of our Affections, was doubtless intended by God to be the *first* guide of Humane Nature; that so when as yet 'tis not capable of following Reason and Conscience, it might be directed to what is Good, and preserved from wicked Habits and Prejudices by its own *Sense* and *Feeling*, till such time as its capable of the

Conduct of Reason, that so when this leading Faculty undertakes the Charge of it, it may find it *pliant* and *obsequious* to its *Dictates*; and be able to manage it with more *Ease* and *Facility* and that by the natural Drift and Tendency of our Affections God hath plainly *revealed* to us what is good and what not.

IV. God hath also entailed upon our Actions natural *Rewards* and *Punishments*, and thereby plainly declared which are *good* and which *evil*. For it is easily demonstrable by an Induction of Particulars, that every Vertue hath some natural Efficacy in it to advance both our *publick* Good and our *private* Interest. That *Temperance* and *Charity*, *Righteousness*, and *Fidelity*, *Gratitude* and *Humility* are not only *convenient*, but absolutely *necessary* to our Joy and comfort, our Peace and Quietness, our Safety and Contentment; to the Health of our *Body*, and the Satisfaction of our *Mind*, and the Security and Happiness of our *Society* with one another. Whereas on the contrary, Vice naturally teems with *Mischievous* Effects and is ever productive of *Horror* in the Conscience, *Anguish* in the Mind, *Discord* in the Affections, *Diseases* in the Body, and *Confusions* and *Disturbances* in Humane Society. Since therefore the Divine Wisdom and Contrivance hath thus inseparably coupled good Effects to good Actions and evil ones to evil, it hath hereby very *plainly* and *sensibly* declared to us what it would have us *do* and what *not*. For seeing it hath so constituted things as that in the Course of Nature such Proportions of *Happiness* do necessarily result to us from *such* Actions, and such proportions of *Misery*

sery from their *Contraries*, what can be more evident than that its design was hereby to *encourage* us to the one and *affright* us from the other? So that by these *natural* Rewards and Punishments which in the Course of things God hath chained to our Actions, he hath as *expresly* prescribed us what to do and what not, as he could have done if he had spoken to us in an *audible* voice from the Battlements of Heaven. For since the whole Train of Natural Effects is to be resolved into the *Providence* of God, and since his Providence hath so *ordered* and *contrived* things, as that in the ordinary Course of them *good* Effects do spring out of *good* Actions and *evil* of *evil* ones, what else could he intend by it but to *allure* us to the one, and *terrifie* us from the other? For it is by *Rewards* and *Punishments* that all Lawgivers declare their Will and Pleasure concerning those Actions which they *command* and *forbid*? and therefore since God in his Providential Government of the World hath thought good to link natural *Rewards* to *such* Actions, and natural *Punishments* to *such*, these are to be look'd upon as the great *Sanctions* of the Law of Nature, whereby he commands what *pleases*, and prohibits, what *displeases* him. For when God had no otherwise revealed himself to the World than only by the establish'd *Course* and *Nature* of things, that was the great *Bible* by which alone Mankind was instructed in their Duty; and there being no *revealed* Threats or Promises annexed to good and bad Actions, God's Will and Pleasure concerning them was *visible* only in the *good* and *bad* Consequents which they drew after them; which are so
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plain and obvious to the Observation of Mankind that 'twould be the most *inexcusable* Inadvertency not to take notice of them. So that the *moral* Good and Evil of all Actions, finally resolves into the natural Good and Evil that is appendant to them; and therefore are our Actions morally *good*, because they are naturally *beneficial* to us, and therefore morally *evil*, because they are naturally *prejudicial* and *hurtful*; and those which in their own nature are neither good nor evil, are *indifferent* in themselves, and left altogether *undetermined* by the Law of Nature, which *commands* and *forbids* nothing but under the Sanction of those *natural* Rewards and Punishments which in the Course of things are made necessary to Humane Actions.

V. To these *natural* Rewards and Punishments which God hath entailed upon good and bad Actions, he hath thought good many times to superadd *supernatural Blessings and Judgments*. For tho he had before sufficiently expressed his Will concerning Humane Actions in the great *Bible of Nature*, and by their *natural* Effects had plainly enough distinguished the *good* from the *bad*; yet considering what *heedless* and *inobservant* Creatures we are, and how apt to *overlook* the ordinary Consequents of our Actions, he hath not altogether abandoned us to the easie Instructions of nature, but out of his superabundant Care to shew us what is Good and lead us to our Duty and Happiness, he hath from time to time seconded the *natural* Rewards and Punishments of our Actions with *supernatural Favours and Judgments*; that so by these he might
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awake our *drowsie* Attention, and revive in us the *languishing* sense of our Duty. Of which we have infinite Instances in the several Ages of the World; there being scarce any History either Sacred or Profane that abounds not with them. Several of which both Blessings and Judgments do as plainly evince themselves to be *intended* by God for *Rewards* and *Punishments*, as if they had been attended with a Voice from Heaven proclaiming the Reasons for which they were sent. For how many famous Instances have we of miraculous *Deliverances* of *Righteous* Persons, who by an *Invisible* Hand have been *rescued* from the greatest Dangers, when in all outward appearance their Condition was *hopeless* and *desperate*; and of wonderful *Blessings* that have hapned to them not only *without*, but *contrary* to all secondary Causes; of some that have been so eminently rewarded *in kind*, as that the Goods which they *received* were most visible Significations of the Goods which they *did*; and others who have received the Blessings which they have asked, *whilst* they were *praying* for them, and obtained them with such *distinguishing* Circumstances as plainly signified them to be the *Answers* and *Returns* of their devout Addresses to Heaven? And so on the contrary, how many notable Examples are there of such miraculous *Judgments* inflicted upon *unrighteous* Persons, as have either *exceeded* the Power of secondary Causes, or been caused by them *contrary* to their *natural* tendencies? of men that have been punished in the very *Act* of their Sin, and sometimes in the very *Part* by which they have offended; that have had the evil of their *Sin* retaliated upon

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them in a *correspondent* Evil of *Suffering*, and been *struck* with those very Judgments which they have *imprecated* on themselves in the Justification of a known Falshood? All which *supernatural* Judgments and Blessings of God are only his *Comments* on the *Text* of Nature, by which he farther explains to us the *Meaning* of those *natural* Rewards and Punishments which Vertue and Vice draw after them, and shews us what clear *Indications* they are of his Almighty *Pleasure* and *Displeasure*. For when he *rewards* men *supernaturally*, it is for those Actions that carry a *natural* Reward with them, and when he *punishes* them *supernaturally*, it is for such Actions as do carry a *natural* Punishment with them, so that his *supernatural* Rewards and Punishments do speak the *same* Sense and Language with his *natural*, only they speak *plainer* and *louder*, to rowse and awake those *stupid* Souls that are *deaf* to and *regardless* of the soft and still voice of *natural* Rewards and Punishments. Thus when the old World by not attending to the *natural* Consequents of their own Actions had almost extinguished their Sense of Good and Evil, God by a *supernatural* Deluge in which he drowned the *wicked* and preserved the *righteous*, consigned to all future Generations a standing *Monument* of his *Hatred* of *Sin*, and *Love* of *Righteousness*: that so by the *Remembrance* of it he might keep mens *heedless* Minds more attentive to the *natural* Rewards and Punishments of their Actions. And when the *Remembrance* of *this* was almost *worn out*, and with it mens *natural* Sense of good and evil, God by *raining down* Fire and Brimstone upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, and re-

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scuing the Righteous Lot from that dire Conflagration, alarm'd the World with a new *Declaration* of the wide Distinction he makes between Vertue and Vice. And lastly, when the Vertue of these great Examples was almost *spent*, God raised up the People of *Israel*, and by the miraculous *Blessings* he bestowed on them when they did *well*, and the stupendous *Judgments* he inflicted when they did *wickedly*, exposed them to all the Nations round about for a standing *Demonstration* of the vast Difference he makes between Good and Evil. For so the Psalmist tells us, *Psalms* 96. verse 2. compared with *Psalms* 102. verse 15. *The Lord hath made known his Salvation, his Righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the Heathen; that the Heathen might fear the Name of the Lord, and all the Kings of the Earth his Glory.* Thus by frequent Examples of *supernatural* Rewards and Punishments God hath been always *instructing* the degenerate World in the Essential Differences between Good and Evil.

VI. And lastly, To inforce all this God hath made sundry supernatural *Revelations*, wherein he hath plainly instructed us what *Actions* are *good* and what *evil*. That he hath made sundry *Revelations* to the World is evident in the Fact, because there are sundry *Revelations* *extant*, which by those many miraculous Effects of the Divine Power that attended the Ministration of them, have been sufficiently demonstrated to be of a *divine* Original. And such are those contained in the five Books of *Moses*, and the *Prophets*, which have been almost amply *confirmed*, both by the *Miracles* which were wrought by their inspired

Authors, and the exact *Accomplishment*. of the several *Predictions* contained in them. And such is also the *last* and *best* Revelation contained in the *New Testament*; which both by the *Types* and *Predictions* of the *Law* and *Prophets*, and the infinite *Miracles* wrought by *Jesus* and his Followers, together with its own *inherent* Wisdom and Goodness, hath been so effectually proved a *divine Revelation*, that nothing but Ignorance or inveterate Prejudice can cause any man to *disbelieve* or *suspect* it.

Now if you consult these several Revelations, you will find that the main Drift and Design of them is to *detect* and *expose* what is morally evil, and *explain* and *recommend* to us what is morally good. For thus the several Revelations made to *Abraham* and his Children were only so many *Repetitions* of that *Covenant of Righteousness* which God had struck with them, to encourage them to persevere in well doing. Thus the Law of *Moses* consisted partly of *Ceremonial Rites*; which were either intended for *Divine Hieroglyphicks* to instruct that *dull* and *stupid* People in the Principles of inward Purity and Goodness, or else for *Types* and *Figures* of the holy Mysteries of the Gospel: and partly of Precepts of *Morality*, together with some few of *Policy*, suited to the Genius of that People; and partly of such *Promises* and *Threats* as were judged most apt to oblige them to the Practice of Piety. And as for the *Prophets*, the substance of their Revelations was either *Reprehensions* of Sin, together with severe *Denunciations* against it; or *Invitations* to Vertue and Piety, together with gracious *Promises*

ses to encourage them to practise it; or *Predictions* of the *Messias* and of that *everlasting Righteousness* which was to be introduced by him. And then as for the *Gospel*, all the Duty of it consists either in *Instances*, or *Means* and *Instruments* of Moral Goodness; and all the *Doctrines* of it are nothing but powerful *Arguments* to oblige us to the Practice of those Duties. Thus the great Intendment of all God's Revelations is to *explain* and *enforce* the Duties of Morality; to discover the *Nature*, and lead us on to the *Practice* of them by the most powerful Obligations. And in this most perfect *Map* of the Road to Happiness, all the *Tracts* of Piety and Vertue are so plainly *described* and *delineated* to us, that no man can possibly *miss* his Way, that sincerely *enquires* after it. For tho in matters of *Opinion* men may be *innocently* misled and deceived, yet there is no Article either of *Doctrine* or *Duty* upon which our Happiness necessarily depends, wherein it is possible for an *honest* and *diligent* Mind to be mistaken. And thus you see by how many excellent ways God hath *discovered* to us which of our Actions are good and which evil. So that if after all this we proceed in any sinful and immoral Courses, we are utterly *inexcusable*. For if after God hath thus *plainly* made known his will to us, we still persist to contradict it in our *Practice*, we do thereby in effect declare that we *regard not* the Almighty, and that we will *do* what we list, let him *will* what he pleases. And what an unpardonable Insolence is it for us who depend upon his Breath, and hang upon his Providence every moment, to treat him as if he had

nothing to do with us, and were the meereſt Cypher and moſt *inſignificant* Being in the World? For though 'tis true he hath not made ſo full a Diſcovery of his Will to *ſome* as to *others*, yet he hath ſo ſufficiently diſcovered it to *all*, that none can pretend to the Excuse either of *invincible* or *unaffected* Ignorance. For as for the Heathen, tho they have no Revelation of God's Will *without* them, yet they have the Bible of Conſcience *with-in* them, and the large and legible Bible of Nature that lies continually open *before* them, in which they may eaſily read the *principal* Differences between Good and Evil, and all the great Principles of Morality. And if notwithstanding this they will be ſo regardless of God as not to *attend* to and *comply* with thoſe natural Diſcoveries of his Will, what Pretence can be made for them why they ſhould not periſh for ever in their obſtinacy? For as the Apoſtle tells us, *though they had not the Law*, that is, the revealed Law, yet they did, or at leaſt might have done, *by nature the things contained in the Law*; and therefore as many of them, ſaith he, *as ſinned without this revealed Law, ſhall periſh without the Law*, that is, by the Sentence of the Law of Nature, *Rom. 2. 12. 14.* And then as for the Jews beſides thoſe *natural* Indications of God's Will which they had in common with the Heathen, they had ſundry *ſupernatural* ones; they had ſundry great and notorious Examples of God's *rewarding* good men, and *puniſhing* bad; and beſides they had the Law of *Moses*, the *Moral* part of which was but a *new Edition* of the Law of Nature; as for the *Ceremonial* Part of it, it was thought an *obſcure*, yet an *intelligible*

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Representation of all those sublime Motives to Piety and Vertue, which the Gospel more *plainly* proposes. So that would the *Jews* but have heedfully attended either to the *spiritual Sense* of their Law, or to the *Sermons* of their *Prophets* which very much *cleared* and *explained* it, they could not have been ignorant either of any material Part of their *Duty*, or of any considerable *Motive* by which it is pressed and inforced. And if notwithstanding, they would be so *regardless* of God, as to take no notice of his *Judgments* and *Mercies*; so rude to his Authority as not to mind either his Law *within* or his Law *without* them, upon what reasonable Pretence can they excuse themselves? But then as to us Christians, we have not only all those *natural Discoveries* of our Duty which the *Heathen* had, and all those *Supernatural* ones which the *Jews* had, but a great deal more. For in our Revelation the *Laws* and *Motives* of Vertue are set before us in a much *clearer* Light, and are neither wrapt up in *Mystical* Senses nor overcast with *typical* Representations, but laid before us in the most plain and easie Propositions. For that which was the *Mystical* Sense of the Jewish Law, is the *literal* Sense of the Christian; in which all those Precepts and Promises and Threats which were delivered to the *Jews* in *dark Riddles*, *obscure* and *typical* Adumbrations, are brought forth to us from behind the Curtain, and proposed in plain and popular Articles. So that if we still continue in our sinful Courses, we are of all men the most *inexcusable*. The Heathen may plead against the *Jews*, that their Law of Nature was not so *clear* in its Precepts, nor yet so

cogent in its motives as the Law of *Moses*; the *Jews* may plead against us Christians, that *their* Law of *Moses* was neither so *express* in the Precepts, nor yet so *intelligible* in its best and most powerful Motives as *our* Gospel; but as for us Christians, we have nothing to plead, but by our own Obstinacy against the *clearest* Discoveries of our Duty do stand condemned to everlasting Silence. So that when it shall appear at the dread Tribunal of God, that we have persisted in our wickedness notwithstanding all *these* advantages, we must expect to be *reproached* by all the Reasonable World, to be *exploded* and *hiss'd* at, not only by Saints and Angels, but by the *Jews* and the *Gentiles*, and the Devils themselves, who will all conspire with our own Consciences to *second* our woful *Doom* with the Loud Acclamation of *Just and Righteous art thou O Lord in all thy Ways*. Wherefore as we would not perish for ever without *Pity* and *Excuse*, let us make haste to forsake *all ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present World*.

S E C T. III.

That those Actions which carry with them this perpetual Obligation are the main and Principal Parts of Religion.

THE truth of which is most evident from the abovenamed Text, *Mic. 6. 8. And what doth the Lord require of thee but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Which Interrogation tho it implies not an *absolute* Negation, *viz.* that the Lord required *nothing else* of them (for under the Law he required *Sacrifices*, and sundry other positive Duties, as under the Gospel he requires *Sacraments* and *Reading* and *Hearing* his holy Word, &c. which are *positive* Duties as well as those legal Institutions of *Moses*;) yet it plainly implies a *comparative* Negation, *viz.* that the Lord requires nothing else so *principally* and *affectionately*, so for the sake of *things themselves* and upon the account of their own *inherent* Beauty and Goodness, as he doth these Moral Duties here specified. He did indeed require the *Jews* to offer *Sacrifice* to him, and to perform those other *Ceremonial Rites* specified in the Law of *Moses*; and for them wilfully to have neglected those Duties would have been such an avowed Defiance to his Authority as would have rendred them justly obnoxious to all the Judgments threatned in their Law; but yet he did much more *earnestly* require them to be *just* and *merciful* and *humble*, and manifested himself to be

be far better pleased with *one* Act of Moral Goodness than with a *thousand* Sacrifices. And thus he requires of us Christians that we should communicate with him and with one another in our *Evangelical Sacraments*, and dutifully conform to all those sacred *Institutions* and *Solemnities* of Religion which are contained in the Gospel; and if we wilfully neglect them, we justly incur all that everlasting Vengeance which is there denounced; but yet our sincere compliance with the *immutable* Obligations of Piety and Vertue, is a thousand-fold *more* acceptable to God than our strictest Observation of these his *positive* Institutions. So that the Question in the Text, *what doth the Lord require of thee* plainly implies this Proposition, that tho God doth exact of us certain Duties which are *not* moral, *i. e.* have no *intrinsic* necessity in them, yet it is the Moral Duties, such as *Justice* and *Mercy* and *Humility* which he principally requires at our hand. Thus concerning *Sacrifice*, God plainly tells us, *I will have mercy and not Sacrifice*, *i. e.* I will have Mercy rather than Sacrifice, *Hof. 6. 6.* And the Wise man assures us that *to do Justice is more acceptable to the Lord than Sacrifice*, *Prov. 2. 3.* And to the same purpose our Saviour himself pronounceth, even before that Ceremonial Worship was abolished, that *to love the Lord with all our heart, with all our understanding, with all our Soul, and with all our strength, and to love our Neighbour as our selves is more than all burnt-offerings and Sacrifices*, *Mark 10. 33.* But for the clearer Demonstration of this great and necessary Truth, I shall endeavour, First, to prove the *Truth* of it by some Scripture Arguments,

ments. Secondly, to assign the *Reasons* of it. As for the *Proof* of it, the following Particulars will be abundantly sufficient.

First, That the Scripture plainly declares that the great *Design* of all the *Doctrinals* of Religion hath always been to *move* and persuade men to the practice of Moral Goodness.

Secondly, That the main *Drift* and *Scope* of all the *positive* Duties of Religion hath been always to *improve* and *perfect* men to Moral Goodness.

Thirdly, That God expresses in Scripture a great *Contempt* of all the *positive* Duties of Religion whenever they are *separated* from Moral Goodness.

Fourthly, That where ever we find the *Whole* of Religion *summ'd up* in a few Particulars, they are always such as are *Instances* of Moral Goodness.

Fifthly, That wherever such *Persons* as have been most *dear* and *acceptable* to God are *described* in Scripture, their *Churches* always consist of some *Instances* or other of Moral Goodness.

Sixthly, That the Scripture plainly declares that at the great *Account* between God and our Souls, the main *Inquisition* will be concerning our Moral Good or Evil.

I. The Scriptures expressly declare that the great *Design* of the *Doctrines* of Religion is to *move* and *persuade* men to Moral Goodness. For so the Apostle speaking of the *Grace of God*, i. e. the Gospel, assures us that its great *Design* is to *teach men to deny all ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present World*, Tit. 2. 12. And if we consider
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the Doctrines in *Particular*, we shall find that they all conspire in this great Design. For so the Doctrine of *eternal life* is proposed by God to persuade us to *cleanse our selves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. 7. 1. So also the Doctrine of our future punishment is levell'd against all *unrighteousness and ungodliness of men*, Rom. 1. 18. And as for these Doctrines which concern the *Transactions* of our Saviour, they are all proposed to us as *Arguments* to persuade us to Piety and Vertue. For 'twas for this cause that Christ was manifested, to destroy the works of the Devil, 1 John 3. 8. 'Twas for this purpose that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin should live to Righteousness, 1 Pet. 2. 24. 'Twas for this end that he rose from the dead, that thereby he might prevail with us to walk in newness of life, Rom. 6. 4. and 'tis for this end that he intercedes for us at the right hand of God, that thereby he might encourage us to come to God by him, Heb. 7. 2. and in a word, for this cause he hath told us he will come to Judgment, to reward every man according to his works, that thereby he might stir us up to Sobriety and Vigilance and to all holy conversation and Godliness, Matth. 24. 42. compared with 2 Pet. 3. verse 11. Thus you see all the Doctrines of Religion are only so many *Topicks* of divine Persuasion, whereby God addresses himself to our Hope and Fear, and every other Affection in us that is capable of Persuasion, to excite us to comply with the eternal Obligations of Morality; and there is no one Article in all our Religion, that is matter of mere Speculation, or that entertains our

Minds with *dry* and *empty* Notions that have no Influence on our *Wills* and *Affections*. For since the Design of Religion in *general*, is to *bind* and *fasten* our Souls to God, we may be sure that there is no *Part* of it but what doth in some measure contribute hereunto. Since therefore 'tis moral Goodness that God chiefly recommends to us by the Persuasions of Religion, we may be sure that what his *Arguments* do chiefly *persuade* us to, that his *Commands* do chiefly *oblige* us to.

II. From Scripture it is also evident that the main *Drift* and *Scope* of all the *positive* Duties of Religion is to *improve* and *perfect* men in moral Goodness. We find the *Jewish* Religion exceedingly abounded with *positive* Precepts; for *such* were all those sacred *Rites* and *Solemnities* of which the Bark and Outside of that Religion consisted; of all which 'tis true what the Psalmist saith of *Sacrifices* in particular, *thou desirest not Sacrifices, thou delightest not in burnt offerings*, Psalm 51. 16. that is, thou takest no delight in them upon the score of any *internal* Goodness that is in them, but desirest them merely as they are *instituted means* and *Instruments* of Moral Goodness. For so many of the Rites of the *Mosaic* Law were instituted in opposition to the *Magical*, *Unclean* and *Idolatrous* Rites of the *Eastern* Heathen. As particularly, that Prohibition of *sowing their Fields with mingled Seed*, Lev. 19. 19. in opposition to that *Magical* Rite which the Heathens used as a *Charin* for Fructification. So also that Command of sprinkling the Blood of their Sacrifices upon the Ground like Water and covering it with Dust, in Opposition to that *Idolatrous* Rite of gathering the
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Blood into a *Trench* or *Vessel*, and then *sitting* round it in a *Circle*, whilst they imagined their gods to be *licking* it up. And to name no more of this kind, the Prohibition of *seething a Kid in his Mothers Milk*, *Exod. 23. 10.* was in Opposition to a Custom of the Ancient Heathens, who at the *In-gathering* of their Fruits were wont to take a Kid and seeth it in the milk of its Dam, and then in a *Magical Procession* to sprinkle all their *Trees* and *Fields* and *Gardens* with it, thereby to render them more fruitful the following Year. Besides all which you may find a World of other Instances in *Maimonides More Nevoch. lib. 3* who tells us, that the knowledge of the Opinions and Customs of these Eastern Churches was *porta magna ad reddendas preceptorum causas*, the great *Rationale* of the *Mosaick Precepts*; and that *multarum legum rationes & cause mihi innotuerint ex cognitione fidei, rituum & Cultus Zabiorum*; i. e. that by being acquainted with the opinions and customs of those Eastern Heathens, he understood the grounds and reasons of many of the *Laws of Moses*, *More Nevoch. lib. 3 cap. 29.* So that though these Precepts were not Moral, yet were they set up as so many *Fences* by God, to keep the People from *straggling* into those Heathenish Immoralities.

Again, there are other Rites of their Religion, which were instituted to shadow out the *Holy Mysteries* of the Gospel; the great Design of which Mysteries was to *invite* and *persuade* men to comply with the eternal Laws of Morality. Thus their Laws of *Sacrifice* were instituted to represent to them the great Transactions of their future *Messias*; his incarnation and immaculate Life,

Life, his *Death* and *Resurrection*, *Ascension* and *Intercession* at the right hand of God. So also their *Festival* Laws, and particularly their Laws of *Jubilee*, were made to *shadow* out their Doctrines of our *Redemption* and *eternal Life*; and their pouring out *Water* in their Sacrifices, and their Ritual *Purgations* from uncleanness, were intended for obscure *Intimations* of the *Effusion* of the holy Spirit, and the Doctrine of *Remission of Sins*; all which Doctrines carry with them the most pregnant *Invitations* to *Piety* and *Vertue*.

Lastly, There are other Rites of that Law which were appointed to *instruct* them in Moral Duties. For God finding them not only a *perverse*, but a *dull* and *sottish* People, as those generally are that have been born and bred in *Slavery*, apprehended that the most effectual way to instruct them would be by *Signs* and material *Representations*, even as Parents do their Children by *Pictures*. And accordingly in *Isaiah* 28. 10. he tells us that he gave them *line upon line*, and *precept upon precept*, *here a little and there a little*, with a *stammering tongue*; i.e. he looked upon them as *Children*, and so condescended to their *Weakness*, and spake to them in their own *Dialect*. And this way of instructing them by *outward* and *visible* Signs, being much in use in the *Eastern* Countries, and more especially in *Egypt*, whose manners they were infinitely *fond* of, was of all others the most *probable* and *taking*. And accordingly a great part of the Jewish Rites consisted of *Hieroglyphicks*, or *visible* Signs, by which their minds were *instructed* in the Precepts of Morality. Thus by *Circumcision* God signified to them the
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necessity of *mortifying* their *unchast* Desires; by their *Legal Washings* he intimated to them their Obligations to *cleanse* themselves from all *Impurities* of Flesh and Spirit; yea this, as St. Barnabas in his Epistle tells us, was the Intent of all that Difference of *Meats* in the Jewish Law, which pronounced *Swines flesh unclean*, to instruct them not to live like Hogs, that *wallow* in the Mire while they are *full*, and *whine* and *clamour* when they are *empty*; which forbid them to feed on *Eagles* and other Birds of *Prey*, to instruct them to live by *honest Industry*, and not by *Rapine*; which prohibits Fish without *Scales*, that generally live in the *Mud*, to teach the evil of *Sensuality* and *earthly mindedness*, &c. From all which it is evident that Moral Goodness was the constant *Mark* at which all the positive Precepts of their Law were *levelled*.

And then as for the *Christian Religion*, all the *positive* Precepts it contains are directed to the *same* End. It requires us to *believe* in Jesus Christ, and in his Mediation to *draw near unto God*; the Design of which *Faith* it expressly tells us is to *Sanctifie our Natures*, Acts 26. 18. and to *purifie our hearts*, Acts 15. 9. It enjoins us to be *Baptized* into the Name of Jesus; and for what purpose? but to oblige us thereby to *die to sin and to walk in newness of life* Rom. 6. 4. It requires us to *commemorate* our Saviour's Passion in a *Sacramental Communion* of his Body and Blood; and to what End? but only to exite us to *Love* and *Thankfulness* to God, and *Charity* towards one another, 1 Cor. 5. 7, 8. In a word, it requires us to live in *Unity* with the *Church*, and not to se-

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parate our selves from her Sacred Assemblies; and for what other reason, but that we might become an holy Temple, and an habitation of God, by being compacted together into an uniform and regular Society, *Ephes. 2. 21, 22.* Since therefore all the Precepts both of the *Old* and *New Testament*, which are purely positive, do bear a Respect to Moral Goodness, and were imposed by God in subserviency thereunto, it is evident that that is the principal Mark which he designs and aims at.

III. Another Evidence from Scripture, that Moral Goodness is the principal matter of our Duty, is the great Contempt which God expresses of the positive Duties of Religion when ever they are separated from moral Goodness. For thus concerning the Positives of the Jewish Religion, we are told that *the Sacrifice of the wicked is an Abomination to the Lord, Prov. 15. 8.* And concerning the Whole of their positive Religion, the Prophet thus pronounces in the Name of God, *To what purpose is the multitude of your Sacrifices to me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-Offerings of Rams, and of the fat of fed Beasts, i. e. so full as that I loath them; and I delight not in the blood of Bullocks, or of Lambs, or of He Goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required these things at your hands, to tread my Courts? bring no more vain Oblations; Incense is Abomination to me; the new Moons and Sabbaths, the calling of Assemblies I cannot away with; it is Iniquity, even the Solemn meetings. Your new Moons and your appointed Feasts my Soul hateth, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes, yea,*
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when ye make many Prayers I will not hear. And what I beseech you is the reason that God should thus dislike his own Institutions? Why he plainly tells you, *your hands are full of blood, your Cruelty and Oppression doth profane your Worship, and turn it all into Impiety, Isa. 1. 11. to the 16th.* For so *Isai. 66. 3.* he plainly tells them, *he that killeth an Ox, is as if he slew a Man; he that sacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dogs neck; he that offereth an Oblation, as if he offered Swines blood; he that burneth Incense, as if he blessed an Idol; and why so? why they have chosen their own ways, i. e. of Impiety and Wickedness, and their Soul delighteth in their Abominations.* Nor doth God express a less Contempt of the Positives of Christianity, when separated from moral Goodness. For thus St. James tells us even of our Faith or Belief in Jesus, that without Works it is dead; that it is a senseless, squalid thing that hath neither Life nor Beauty in it, *James 2. 17.* And S. Peter compares Baptism to the washing of a Swine when it is separated from Purity of Life and Manners, *2 Pet. 2. 22.* And our receiving the Lord's Supper without Charity and Devotion is by S. Paul stiled *coming together to condemnation, 1 Cor. 11. 34.* All which is a plain Demonstration that moral Goodness is the principal matter that God insists on; since 'twas this that sanctified the Sacrifices of the Jews, and crowned all the Ceremonial Observances with the divine Acceptation, and without this all their other Sacrifices were noisom and offensive to him; and it is this that perfumes our Faith and our Sacraments, our Prayers and Religious Assemblies, and renders them a

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grateful and sweet smelling savour in the Nostriks of God, and without this they are all a hateful stench and Annoyance to him. Doubtless therefore the principal matter of Duty which God requires of us, is that which he esteems the Grace and Fragrancy of all other Duties.

IV. Another Evidence from Scripture that moral Goodness is the principal matter that God requires of us, is, that where-ever we find the *Whole of Religion summed up in a few particulars*, they are always such as are *Parts and Instances* of moral Goodness. Thus in the above cited *Mic. 6. What doth the Lord require of thee? but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.* Thus also the Prophet *Isaiah* giving an account to his People what they were to do in order to their Reconciliation with God, thus directs them, *wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the Fatherless, plead for the Widow; come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord, Isai. 1. 16, 17, 18.* So also our blessed Saviour sums up the *Whole Duty of Man* into two Particulars: and what are they? Why, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great Commandment. And the second is like to it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self; on these two Commandments hang the Law and the Prophets, Matth. 22. 37, 38, 39, 40.* Thus St. James, *True Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the Fatherless and Widow in their Afflictions, and to keep himself unspotted from the World,*

James 1. 27. And elsewhere the Apostle *sums up* the whole Law into one leading *Head* of Morality, and that is *Love*; for *love*, saith he, *is the fulfilling of the Law*, *Rom.* 13. 10. So this Observation generally holds true, that in all those *Summaries* of Duty mentioned in the holy Scripture, only *such* Duties are taken notice of as are *Parts* and *Instances* of Morality. Which is a plain Demonstration that 'tis this which God principally *requires*, since 'tis this which he most *takes notice of*; and it may be reasonably supposed that in those Summaries of our Duty wherein but a few parts are enumerated, they are such as are the *chief* and *principal*; it being contrary to all Rules of Language to express the *Whole* of any thing by the *meanest* and most *inconsiderable* parts of it.

V. Another Evidence from Scripture that moral Goodness is the *principal* matter of Duty that God requires of us, is, that wheresoever such *Persons* as have been most *dear* and *acceptable* to God are *described*, their *Character* is always made up of *Instances* of Morality. Thus the Description of *Job* is, *that he was a man perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil*, *Job* 1. 1. and in the 15th Psalm the Description which *David* gives of the man who should abide in the Tabernacle of the Lord, is this, *that he walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart; that he backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his Neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his Neighbour, &c.* *He that doth these things*, saith he, *shall never be moved.* And the greatest Character that

that is given of *Moses* the *Darling* and *Favourite* of God, is, that he was very meek above all the men that were upon the face of the Earth, *Numb.* 12. 3. Thus also the Character of *Cornelius* by which he was so endeared to God, is, that he was a just and devout man, one that feared God with all his house, who gave much Alms to the people, and prayed to God always, *Acts* 10. 2. And in a word, the general Character of those whom God accepts, is, in every Nation he who doth righteousness is accepted of God, *Acts* 10. 35. Thus Moral Goodness is the great Stamp and Impress that renders men current in the Esteem of God; whereas on the contrary, the common Brand by which *Hypocrites* and false Pretenders to Religion are stigmatized, is their being zealous for the Positives, and cold and indifferent as to the *Morals* of Religion. But so our Saviour characters the Pharisees; *Woe unto you Scribes, and Pharisees, Hypocrites; for ye pay tythe of Mint, Anise, and Cummin, which yet was a positive Duty, and have omitted the weightier matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy, and Faithfulness; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind Guides, ye strain at a Gnat, and swallow a Camel, Matth.* 23. 23, 24. plainly implying the *Morals* of Religion to be as much greater than the Positives in weight and moment, as a Camel is than a Gnat in bulk. Since therefore Moral Goodness is always mentioned as the great Character of God's Favourites, and the neglect of it out of a pretended zeal to the positive duties of Religion is always recorded as a mark of the most odious Hypocrites; this is a sufficient Argument how high a Value God sets upon the Moralities of Religion.

VI. And lastly, Another Evidence from Scripture that moral Goodness is the *principal* part of Religion, is, that at the great *Account* between God and us, his main *Inquisition* will be concerning such Actions as are *morally* good or evil. For so *Rom. 2. 6.* We are told that God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for honour and glory and immortality, eternal life. But to them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, tribulation and wrath, indignation and anguish. And accordingly *Enoch* as he is quoted by *St. Jude* verses 14, 15. declares this to be the Occasion of the Lord's coming with thousands of his Saints, viz. to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him; all which are matters of Fact against the eternal Rules of Morality. And our Saviour himself in that popular Scheme and Description he gives of proceedings of the *Day of Judgment*, plainly declares that one of the principal matters he will then inquire into, will be our Neglect or Observation of that great moral duty of *Charity* towards the poor and needy, *Matth. 25. 3, 46.* Which is a plain Evidence that our obeying or disobeying the eternal Laws of Morality, is that by which we do most please or displease God; since 'tis upon this that he will most insist in his final Arbitration of our eternal Fate. For since his last Judgment is only the final Execution of his Laws, we may be sure that whatsoever it is that he will principally

cipally insist on in his *Judgment*, that is the *principal* matter of his *Laws*. And now having sufficiently proved the *Truth* of the Proposition, I proceed to the *Reasons* of it; upon what *Accounts* it is that God hath made moral Goodness the main and principal Part of our Religion. The chief Reasons of which are these four.

First, Because 'tis by moral Goodness that we do most *honour* him.

Secondly, Because 'tis by this that we do most *imitate* him.

Thirdly, Because 'tis by this that we advance to our own *Happiness*.

Fourthly, When all our *positive* Duty is ceas'd, this is to be the *eternal* Work and Business of our Nature.

I. God hath made moral Goodness the *principal* Part of our Religion, because 'tis by this that we do him the greatest *Honour*. It is an excellent saying of *Hierocles*, *πρὸς ποιῆσαι τὴν ἀνενδεῆς ἢ τῆς ὡς ἐκείνους προσενομένων ἀγαθῶν ὑποδοχή· ἔ γὰρ πρῶται δὲ δὲν διδύς π αὐτῷ, ἀλλ' ἀξιῶ τὴν λαβεῖν τὰ παρ' ἐκείνους γινόμενα*, The best Honour we can do to a self-sufficient Being is to receive the good things he holds forth unto us; and therefore 'tis not by giving to God that you honour him, but by rendring your selves worthy to receive of him; for, saith he, *ὅστις πρῶτα δὲ δὲν ὡς προσδεόμενον, ἔτι λείπει οἰόμενα ἑαυτὸν τὴν δεῖν εἶναι κρείττονα*, i. e. *Whosoever gives honour to God as to one that wants, doth not consider that he thereby sets himself above God.* For by his own self sufficiency he is infinitely removed above all Capacity of Want, and so can never need any additional Contributions of Glory

and Happiness from his Creatures. For *Glory* being nothing else but the *Resplendency* of Perfection, which always *reflects* its own Beams upon it self, where ever there is *infinite* perfection (as to be sure there is in the Nature of God) there must an *infinite* Glory proceed from it; and therefore being infinitely glorious in *himself*, it is impossible that any thing we do should add any *further* Glory to him. So that if we would truly honour and glorify him, it must not be by giving to, but by receiving from him. Now the best thing we can receive from God, is *Himself*; and Himself we do receive in our strict compliance with the eternal Laws of Goodness. Which *Laws* being transcribed from the *Nature* of God, from his own eternal Righteousness and Goodness, we do by obeying them, derive God's Nature into ours. So that while we write after the Copy of his Laws, we write out the *Perfections* of his Being; and his Laws being the *Seal* upon which he hath engraven his Nature, we do in obeying them take *Impression* from him, and stamp his blessed Nature on our own. For all those virtuous Dispositions of mind which we acquire by the Practice of Virtue, are so many genuine *Signatures* of God, taken from the *Seal* of his Law, and *Participations* of his Nature. For so Holiness which consists in a *Conformity* of Soul with the eternal Laws of Goodness, is in Scripture called the *Signature* or *impression* of the Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of Redemption, Ephes. 4. 30. and such as do righteousness, are said to be born of God, 1 John 2. 29. which implies their deriving from him who is their *Divine* Parent, a *divine* and

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Godlike Nature, even as Children do their *humane* Nature from their *humane* Parents. So that by the Practice of moral Goodness we receive from God the *best* thing he can bestow, *viz.* a *Divine* and *Godlike* Nature; and consequently by so doing, we render him the *highest* Honour and Glory. For since we can no *otherwise* honour him but by *receiving* from him, we doubtless do him the *greatest* honour when we receive *Himself*, by *partaking* of the Perfections of *his* Nature, which are the greatest Gift he can communicate to us. *Herein*, saith our Saviour, *is my Father Glorified*, that ye bear much fruit, John 15. 8. μόνον δὲ οὗτος καρπὸν ὁ ἀπογεγενημένος ἐκ ἐμοῦ ἀποδώσει, saith the aforementioned Philosopher, *i. e.* he only knows how to honour God, who presents *himself* a *Sacrifice* to him, *carves* his own Soul into a *Divine Image*, and *composes* his Mind into a *Temple* for the Entertainment of God, and the Reception of the divine Light and Glory. 'Tis then therefore that we best *honour* God, when by the Practice of true Godliness we *conform* our Wills and Affections to him; and *derive* into our selves *his* Nature and Perfections; and should you erect to him a Temple more magnificent than *Solomon's*, and load his Altars with *Hecatombs* of Sacrifices, and make it perpetually ring with *Psalms* and resounding *Choirs* of *Hallelujahs*, it would not be comparably so *great* an Honour to him, as to convert your own Souls into *living* Temples, and make them the *Habitations* of his Glory and Perfections. For he *values* no Sacrifices like that of an *obedient* Will, *delights* in no Choir like that of *pure* and *heavenly* Affections, nor hath he in all

his Creation an Ensign of Honour so truly *worthy* of him, as that of a *divine* and *God-like* Soul; a Soul that *reflects* his Image, and *shines back* his own Glory upon him. Wherefore since 'tis by the Practice of moral Goodness that we *receive* God, and *copy* his Nature into our own, it is no wonder he should make it the *principal* Part of our Duty. For how can it be otherwise expected but that he should exact that *chiefly* of us, which *most* conduces to his own glory. Since then nothing we can do can conduce to his Glory but only our *receiving* Benefits from him, and since no Benefit we receive from him can so *much* conduce to it as our receiving *Himself*, and since we can no *otherwise* receive himself but by *practising* that Goodness which is the Perfection of his Nature, we must *hereby* doubtless render him the greatest Honour and Glory.

II. God hath made moral Goodness the *principal* Part of our Duty, because 'tis by this that we do most truly *imitate* him. For so you find in Scripture, that every-where God is proposed to us for a *Pattern* of Action, it is by some Act or other of *Morality* that we are required to *transcribe* and *imitate* him. So 1 Pet. 1. 16. *Be ye holy, for I am holy*; and Luke 6. 36. *Be ye merciful as your Father is merciful*; and Matth. 5. 48. *Be ye perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect*. And indeed 'tis *only* in Moral Goodness that God can be the Pattern of our Imitation; as for those Perfections of his which for Distinction-sake we call *Natural*, viz. his *Omniscience* and *Omnipresence*, *Omnipotence* and *Eternity*, they are all beyond the *Sphere* of our Imitation, and therefore were never
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proposed to us as the *Copies* of our Actions. But as for his *moral Perfections*, viz. his *Goodness*, and *Righteousness*, and *Purity*, and *Mercy*, they are the *Fundamental Rules* and *Standards* of all moral Action. For the Nature of God, as it is infinitely good and righteous, is the eternal *Fountain* whence all the Laws of Morality are derived; and all those moral Precepts by which he governs his rational *Creation*, are only so many *Exemplifications* of the moral Perfections of his own Nature. For the *Holiness* of God, which comprehends all his natural Perfections, consists in that *essential Rectitude* of Nature, whereby he always chooses and acts conformably to the Dictates of his own *infallible Reason*; and 'tis to this Rectitude of choosing and acting that all his moral Laws do oblige us. For moral Laws are only the *Dictates* of *Right Reason*, prescribing us what to do, and what to avoid; so that in our Compliance with them, we follow the Rule of God's own Will and Actions, and thereby imitate the eternal Rectitude of his Nature. For though in those different States and Relations of God and Creature, *right Reason* cannot be supposed to oblige him and us to all the same particular Choices and Actions, yet it obliges us both to act reasonably in our respective States and Relations; it obliges God to act reasonably and as it becomes the State and Relation of a God and Creatures: and it obliges us to act reasonably and as it becomes the State and Relation of men and Creatures. And as for God, He is invariably inclined to do all that *right Reason* obliges him to, by the *essential Rectitude* of his own Nature; and herein consists all his *moral Perfections*.

on; which is nothing else but the *immutable* Inclination of his Nature to do whatever is *just* and *good* and *reasonable*. So that while we live according to the *Dictates* of *Reason*, or, which is the same thing, the *Eternal Laws* of Morality, we *trace* and *imitate* the moral Perfections of God; and in *our* Place and Station, live at the same Rate and by the same Rule, that *He* doth in *his*. We do what God himself *would* do, if he were in *our* Place, and what the Son of God *did* do when he was in our Nature; and there is no other Difference between *his* Life and *ours*, but what necessarily arises out of our different States and Relations. Since therefore Moral Goodness is an *Imitation* of God, 'tis no wonder that he so much prefers it *before* all other matter of Duty. For he must needs be supposed to love *that* above all things, which is the true *Copy* and *Image* of those Perfections of his Nature, for the sake of which he loves *Himself* above all. For he loves himself not merely because he is *Himself*, but because he is in all respects *morally Good*, and his *Will* and *Power* are perfectly compliant with the *infallible* Dictates of his own *Reason*; and hence arises his infinite *Complacency* in himself, that there is nothing in him but what his own Reason perfectly *approves*, no *Inclination* in his Will or Nature but what is exactly agreeable to the fairest *Ideas* of his own Mind. And since it is for his own *Goodness-sake* that he loves himself as he doth, we may be sure that there is nothing *without* him can be so dear to him, as *that* in us which is the *Image* of his Goodness. Every like, we say, loves its like, and the *Righteous Lord*, saith the Psalmist,
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loveth Righteousness, Psalm 11. 7. *i. e.* being righteous himself, he loves Righteousness in others by an invincible sympathy of Nature. His greatest Heaven and Delight is in his own most righteous Nature, and next to that in righteous Souls that imitate and resemble him. *Ψυχῆς καὶ δαεῖς τόπον οἰκεϊότερον ὅτι ᾧς θεὸς ἐκ ἔχει.* God hath not a more grateful Habitation upon Earth than in a pure and virtuous Mind; *ὑπέβειν δὲ βροτῆς γάνυμα, τόπον ὅσον ὁλύμπῳ,* saith Apollo that Mimick of God by his Pythian Oracle, *i. e.* I rejoyce as much in pious Souls as in my own Heaven. Which is much what the same with that gracious Declaration that God himself makes by the Prophet, Isaiah 57. 15. Thus saith the high and lofty One, that Inhabith Eternity, whose Name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble Spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Since therefore moral Duties are all but so many Copies and Exemplifications of God's Nature, this is sufficient Reason why he should prefer them before all the Positives of Religion.

III. God principally requires moral Goodness, because 'tis by the Practice of this that we advance to our own natural Happiness. For the natural Happiness of reasonable Creatures, consists in being entirely governed by right Reason; *i. e.* in having our Minds perfectly informed what it is that right Reason requires of us, and our Wills and Affections reduced to an entire Conformity thereunto. And this is the Perfection of moral Goodness, which consists in behaving our selves towards

towards *God* and *our selves* and all the *World* as right Reason *advise*s, or as it *becomes* rational Creatures placed in our Circumstances and Relations. And when by practising all *that* true *Piety* and *Vertue* which moral Goodness implies, we are perfectly *accomplished* in our Behaviour towards God, our selves, and all the World, so as to render to each without any *Reserve* or *Reluctancy* what is *fit* and *due* in the Judgment of right Reason, we are arrived to the most *happy* State that a reasonable Nature can aspire to. 'Tis true, in *this* Life we cannot be perfectly happy; and that not only because we live in *wretched* Bodies that are continually liable to *Pain* and *Sickness*, but also because we are imperfect *our selves*, and have none to converse with but imperfect Creatures. But were we once stript of these *natural* and *moral* Imperfections, wheresoever we lived we should necessarily be happy. Were I to live *all alone*, without this *painful* Body, I should necessarily be in a *great* measure happy while I followed right reason, though I lived in the *darkest* Nook of the Creation. For *there* I should still *contemplate* God, and while I did so, my mind would be always *ravish'd* with his Beauty and Perfections; *there* I should most *ardently* love him, and while I did so, I should *sympathize* and *share* with him in his Happiness; *there* I should still *adore* and *praise* him, and while I did so, I should feel my self continually *drawn up* to him, and *wrap'd* into a real Injoyment of him; *there* I should be *imitating* his Perfections, and while I did so, I should enjoy an *unspeakable* Self-satisfaction, perceiving how every moment I grew a
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more *Divine* and *God-like* Creature ; *there* I should intirely resign up my self to his heavenly *Will* and *Disposal*, and while I did so, I should be perpetually exulting under a joyous Assurance of his *Love* and *Favour* ; in a word, *there* I should firmly depend upon his *Truth* and *Goodness*, and while I did so, I should be always triumphing in a sure and certain Hope of a happy Being for ever. Thus were I shut up all alone in an *unbodied* State, and had none but *God* to converse with, by behaving my self towards *him* as right Reason directs me, I should always enjoy him, and in that Enjoyment should be always Happy. And if while I thus behaved my self towards *God*, I took care at the same time to demean my self towards my self with that exact *Prudence* and *Temperance* and *Fortitude* and *Humility* which right Reason requires, I should hereby create another *Heaven* within me ; a Heaven of calm Thoughts, quiet and uniform Desires, serene and placid Affections, which would be so many ever-flowing Springs of *Pleasure*, *Tranquility* and *Contentment* within me. But if while I thus enjoyed *God* and my self, by behaving my self as right Reason directs, I might be admitted to live and converse among perfect Spirits, and to demean my self towards them with that exact *Charity* and *Justice* and *Peaceableness* and *Modesty* which right Reason requires, the Wit of Man could not conceive a true Pleasure beyond what I should now enjoy. For now I should be possess'd of every thing my utmost *Wishes* could propose ; of a good *God*, a *God-like*, joyful and contented Soul, a peaceable, kind and righteous Neighbourhood ; and so all above, within, and without me would be

a pure and perfect Heaven. And indeed when I have *thrown off* this Body, and am *strip'd* into a naked Ghost, the only or at least the greatest goods my Nature will be capable of enjoying, are God, my self, and blessed Spirits; and these are no otherwise *injoyable*, but only by Acts of Piety and Vertue, without which there is no good thing beyond the Grave that a Soul can taste or relish. So that if, when I go to seek my Fortune in the *World of Spirits*, God should thus bespeak me, "O man, now thou art leaving all these Injoyments of *Sense*, consult with thy self what will do thee good, and thou shalt have whatsoever thou wilt ask to carry with thee into that *spiritual* State; I am sure the utmost I should crave would be this, "Lord give me a heart *inflamed* with Love, and *minged* with Duty to thee, that thereby I may but enjoy thee; give me a *sober* and a *temperate* mind, that thereby I may but enjoy my self; give me a *kind*, a *peaceable*, a *righteous* Temper, that thereby I may but enjoy the sweet Society of *blessed* Spirits; O give me but these blessed things, and thou hast *crowned* all my wishes, and to Eternity I will never crave any other Favour for my self but only this, that I may *continue* a pious and vertuous Soul for ever; for while I continue so, I am sure I shall enjoy all spiritual good, and be as happy as *Heaven* can make me. So that the main Happiness you see of Humane Nature consists in the *Perfection* of moral Goodness; and it being so, it is no wonder that the Good God, who above all things *desires* the Happiness of his Creatures, should above all things ex-

act

act of us the Duties of Morality. He knows that our *supreme* Beatitude is founded in our *Piety* and *Vertue*, and that out of our free and constant sprightly and vivacious Exercise of *these* arises all our Heaven both *here* and *hereafter*; and knowing this, that *tender* Love which he bears us, that *mighty* Concern which he hath for our Welfare makes him thus *urgent* and *importunate* with us. For he regards our *Duty* no farther than it tends to our *Good*, and values each Act of our *Obedience* by what it contributes to our *Happiness*; and 'tis therefore that he prefers *moral* Duties above *positive*, because they are more *essential* to our eternal Welfare.

IV. And lastly, God *principally* requires of us moral Goodness, because when all *positive* Duty is ceas'd, *this* is to be the eternal Work and Exercise of our Natures. For moral Good is *from everlasting to everlasting*, its Birth was elder than the World, and its Life and Duration runs parallel with Eternity; before ever *the Mountains were brought forth* 'twas founded in the Nature of God; and as an inseparable *Beam* of his all-comprehending Reason it *shines* from one end of the World to the other. For as soon as ever there was a rational Creature *in being*, the Obligation of Morality laid hold on him, before ever any *positive* Duty was *imposed*; and as long as ever there *remains* a rational Creature, the Obligations of Morality will *abide* on him, when all *positive* Duty is *expired*. For moral Obligations are not founded like *positive* ones upon *mutable* Circumstances, but upon firm and everlasting Reasons; upon Reasons ~~that~~ to all *Eternity* will carry with them the

same force and necessity. For as long as we are the Creatures of an *infinitely perfect* Creator, 'twill be as much our Duty as 'tis now, to *love and adore* him; as long as we are *reasonable* Creatures, 'twill be as much our Duty as 'tis now, to submit our *Will and Affections* to our *Reason*, and as long as we are related to other reasonable Creatures, 'twill be as much our Duty as 'tis now, to be *kind and just and peaceable* in all our Intercourses with them. So that these are but duties as no Will can *dispense* with, no Reason *abrogate*, no Circumstances *disannul* or *make void*; but as long as God is what he *is*, and we are what we *are*, they *must* and *will* oblige us. So that what the Psalmist saith of God, may be truly applied to moral Goodness, *the Heavens shall perish, but thou shalt remain, they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and be folded up and changed, but thou art the same yesterday, to day, and for ever, and thy years shall have no end.* But as long since the *positive* Parts of the Jewish Religion were *cancell'd* and *repealed*, the Veil of the Temple *rent in twain*, the Temple itself *buried* in Ruins, and all its Altars *thrown down*, and their Sacrifices *abolished*, whilst the moral Parts of that Religion still stands *firm* as the everlasting Mountains about *Jerusalem*; so the time will come when the *positive* Parts of Christianity itself must *cease*, when Faith must be *swallowed up* in Vision, and Sacraments be *made void* by Perfection, and all the stated times and outward Solemnities of our Worship *expire* into an everlasting Sabbath; but then when all this *Scene* of things is quite *vanished* away; Piety and Vertue will still keep the *Stage*, and be the everlasting

Exercise

Exercise of our glorified Natures. For as I shewed before, all *positive* Duty is instituted in subserviency to *moral*, and like a Scaffold to a House is only erected for the *Convenience* of building up this everlasting Structure of Morality; and when this is once *finished*, must be all taken down again as an unnecessary *Incumbrance* that now only *hides* and *obscures* the Beauty of that Heavenly Building that was raised *on* it, and shall abide *without* it for ever, to entertain our Faculties through all the future Ages of our Being, and to be the everlasting Mansion of our Natures. Wherefore since positive Duties must all *cease* and *expire*, and only moral Goodness is to be our Business for *ever*, 'tis no wonder that God, who is so good a *Master*, takes so much Care in this short *Apprentiship* of our Life to train us up in that which is to be our *Trade* for ever. He knows it is upon Piety and Vertue that we must *live* to Eternity, and maintain our selves in all our Glory and Happiness; and that if when we come into the invisible World we have not this blessed Trade to *subsist* by, we are *undone* for ever; and therefore out of a tender regard to our Welfare, he makes it his *principal* Care to *train* us up in this everlasting *Business* of our Natures.

What then remains but that *above* all things we take care to apply our selves to the Practice of moral Goodness: to contemplate and love and adore and imitate God; to depend upon him and resign up our selves to his disposal and Government; to be sober and temperate in our Affections and Appetites, and just and charitable and modest and peaceable towards one another.

These are the *great* things which God requires at our hands, and without *these* all our Religion is a fulsome Cheat. 'Tis true the *positive* Parts of Religion are our Duty as well as these, and God by his Sovereign Authority *exacts* them at our hands; and unless when Jesus Christ hath been sufficiently proposed to us we do sincerely *believe* in him, unless we strike Covenant with him by *Baptism*, and frequently renew that Covenant in the *Lord's Supper*; unless we diligently attend on the *Publick Assemblies* of his Worship, and use an honest Care to avoid *Schism* and to persist in *Unity* with his true Catholick Church, there is no pretence of Morality will bear us out when we appear before his dread Tribunal. But then we are to consider that the proper Use of all these *positive* Duties is to *improve* and *perfect* us in *moral* Goodness; and unless we use them to *this* Effect we shall render them altogether *void* and *insignificant*. Wherefore as we would not lose all the *Fruits* of our positive Duties, let us take care to extend them to their utmost *Design*, to improve our *Sacrifice* to *Obedience*, our *Sacraments* to *Gratitude* and *Love*, our *Hearing* to *Practice*, our *Praying* to *Devotion*, and our *Fasting* to *Humility* and *Repentance*. For if we rest in *these* Duties and go no farther, thinking by such short Payments to *Compound* with God for all those Debts we owe to the eternal Laws of Morality, we miserably *cheat* and *besool* our own Souls, which notwithstanding all this Exactness about the *Positives* of Religion are by their own *immortal* Affection still enslaved to the Devil; to whom it is much one

what our outward *Form* of Religion is, whether it be *Christian* or *Heathen* or *Mahometan*, provided it doth not *operate* on our minds or give any *Check* to the Current of our depraved Natures. For whether we bow to *God* or to an *Idol*, is all one to the Devil, so long as our Souls remain *Profane* and *indevout*; whether we Communicate in the holy *Sacrament* of Christ's Death, or in the impure Rights of *Venus* and *Priapus*, is indifferent to him so long as our Hearts continue *putrid* and *corrupt*, steaming with *unchast* Desires and Affections; whether we Celebrate the *Christian Festivals* or the bloody *Saturnals* or Barbarous *Bacchanalia* is no great matter to him, provided our Minds be but canker'd with *Wrath* and *Malice* and *Cruelty* and *Revenge*. These are the *Sinews* of his *Government*, and the *Bands* of our Allegiance to his Throne; and whilst they are preserved, he knows his Kingdom is *safe*, and so long he doth not much regard what our outward Religion is. Nay there is nothing can be a higher Gratification to his Ambition, than to behold *Himself* served in Christ's own *Livery* and Worship'd in a *Form of Godliness*; by which he hath the pleasure of *dividing* Empires with God, and *ravishing* the better share from him; of beholding his hated Creator *mock'd* with the Shell and Outside of a Worshiper, whilst himself is *treated* with the Kernel and Inside. For whilst we continue *wicked* under an outward *Form* of Religion, we do in effect Sacrifice our *Beast* to God, and our *selves* to the Devil; who above all things loves those unnatural Commixtures of *Hearer* and *Slanderer*, *Worshipper* and *Deceiver*, *Communicant*

and *Drunkard, Sacrificer and Oppressor* ; by which we only *exalt and sublimite* Impiety which never looks so Glorious as when 'tis *gilded* with Fasts and long Prayers. Wherefore as you will answer it at your eternal Peril, do not *cheat and abuse* your selves with the *Name and Shadow* of Religion ; lest when you have *superstructed* your Hopes of Happiness on a *rotten* Foundation, it should finally *miscarry* and *sink* underneath you into everlasting Wretchedness and Despair.

CHAP.

C H A P. II.

Concerning Religion ; What it is, and what things are Necessary for the founding and securing its Obligations.

HA V I N G in the foregoing Chapter briefly discoursed concerning the *Nature* of Moral Goodness, and shewn that it is the *principal* Part of Religion, it will be requisite in the next place to *explain* what Religion is, that so from thence we may collect what things are necessary to the *founding* and *securing* its Obligations, which will be the Subject of the ensuing Chapters.

Religion in the General respects *God* as the *Object* and *Centre* of all its Acts and Offices. For upon Supposition, that there is such a Being as a *God*, and that there are such Beings as *unreasonable Creatures*, or *capable Subjects* of Religion, it will necessarily follow that there must be some *Religion* or other to tie and oblige *these* Creatures to *that* God. For by God we mean a Being that hath all *possible Perfection* in him, and is the *supreme Cause* and *Fountain* of all other Being and Perfection; and such a Being we must needs acknowledge doth not only *deserve* the worthiest Acts of Religion, that *reasonable* Creatures, who alone are capable of understanding his *Wrath*

can render to him, but hath also an unalienable Right to *exact* and *require* them; and that not only upon the Account of his own essential *Desert* (for whatever he *deserves* he hath a right to *demand*) but also upon Account of the *Right* he hath to reasonable Creatures, who owe their *Beings* to him and all their *Capacities* of serving him, and so cannot dispose of themselves without manifest Injury to him *contrary* to his Will and Orders. By *reasonable Creatures* we mean Beings that are *derived* from God and are *indowed* by him with a Capacity of understanding *him* and *themselves*; and such Creatures must necessarily stand *obliged* to render him such Acts as are *fit* to, and *due* Acknowledgments of the *Perfections* of his Nature and their own *Dependence* upon him; and this *Obligation* is that which we call *Religion*. Which word according to *Lactantius*, lib. 4. *Divin. Institut.* c. 28. is derived a *religando*, from *binding* or *obliging* us to God. So that *true Religion* in the general is the *Obligation* of *Reasonable Creatures* to render such Acts of *Worship* to God as are *fit* to the *Excellency* of his Nature and their *Dependence* upon him. Which Definition includes both the *Doctrines* and *Duties* of Religion. For the *Doctrines* are the *Reasons* by which it obliges us to the *Duties*: and as there is no Duty in Religion but what derives its *Tie* and *Obligation* from some *Doctrine* contained in it, so there is no *Doctrine* in Religion but what *ties* and *obliges* us to some Duty that is *enjoined* in it. When therefore I call Religion an *Obligation*, I conclude in that term all those *Doctrines* of it concerning God, his Nature, and

his *transactions* with his *Creatures*, which are the *reasons* by which we stand obliged to render all acts of *Worship* to him. But for the better understanding of the nature of true Religion, it is necessary we should distinguish it into *natural* and *revealed*. By *natural Religion* I mean the *Obligation* which *natural Reason* lays upon us to render to God all that *Worship* and *Obedience*, which upon the consideration of his *Nature* and our dependence upon him it discovers to be due to him. For God having planted in us a *rational Faculty*, by the due exercise of which we are naturally led into the belief of his *Being*, the sense of his *Perfections* and the acknowledgment of his *Providence*, he expects we should follow it as the *Guide* and *Directory* of our lives and actions; and whatsoever this Faculty doth *naturally* and in its due exercise dictate to us, is as much the *voice of God* as any *revelation*. For whatever it *naturally* dictates, it must dictate by *his* direction who is the Author of its Nature, and who having framed it to speak *such* a sense and pronounce *such* a judgment of things, hath thereby put *his* word into its mouth, and doth *himself* speak through it as through a standing *Oracle* which he hath erected in our breasts on purpose to convey and deliver his own Mind and Will to us. So that whatsoever *natural Reason* rightly exercised teaches us concerning God and our Duty towards him, is true *Religion*, and doth as effectually bind and oblige us to him as if it had been immediately revealed by him. It teaches us that God is infinitely wise and just and powerful and good; that he is the *Fountain* of our Beings, the *disposer* of our Affairs, and the

the *Arbitrator* of our Fate both here and hereafter; and by these Doctrines it obliges us to *admire* and *adore* him, to *fear* and *love* him, to *trust* and *obey* him. And this is *natural Religion*, which consists of such Doctrines as *natural Reason* teaches us concerning *God* and his *Nature* and *Providence*, and of such Duties as it *infers* from those Doctrines and *inforces* by them; and all the Doctrines of this Religion upon which it founds its Duties, being *eternal verities*, as they must necessarily be, being all deduced from the *immutable* Natures of *God* and things, all the Duties of it must be *morally*, that is *eternally* good and reasonable, because those Doctrines are the *eternal* Reasons upon which they are *founded* and by which they *oblige*. So that whatsoever is a Duty of *natural Religion* must oblige *for ever*, because it obliges by an *eternal Reason*, and so can never be *dispensed* with or *abrogated* till the Natures of things are *cancell'd* and *reversed*, and *eternal Truths* are converted into *Lyes*.

In short therefore, *natural Religion* hath only *natural Reason* for its *rule* and *measure*, which from the Nature of *God* and things deduces all those *eternal* Reasons by which it *distinguishes* our Actions into *honest* and *dishonest*, *decorous* and *filthy*, *good* and *evil*, *necessary* and *sinful*. For it doth not *make* them good or evil by *judging* them so, but if it *judgeth truly*, it *judgeth* of them as it *finds* them; and unless it finds them good or evil *in themselves* upon some *eternal Reason* *for* or *against* them, its judgment is *false* and *erroneous*. So that the *objective* goodness or evil that is in the actions themselves is the measure of our *Natural Reason*,

Reason, but our natural Reason judging *truly* concerning them is the measure of our *choice* or *refusal* of them; for be our action never so good or evil in *itself*, unless we have some *eternal* Reason *for* or *against* it, we cannot *judge* it so; and unless we judge it so, we cannot reasonably *choose* or *refuse* it; but as soon as ever we have *judged* and *pronounced* it good or evil upon an *eternal* Reason, we stand obliged by that judgment to do or forbear it. So that right Reason pronouncing such actions good and such evil, is the *Law* of Nature, and those eternal Reasons upon which it so pronounces them are the *Creed* of Nature, both which together make *natural Religion*. And by *this* Religion was the World Governed, at least the greatest part of it, for some thousands of Years; till by *long* and *sad* Experience it was found too *weak* to *correct* the errors of mens *Minds* and *restrain* the wild extravagancies of their *Wills* and *Affections*; and then God out of his great pity to *lost* and *degenerate* Mankind, vouchsafed to us the glorious Light of *revealed* Religion, which in the *largest* acceptation of it includes all *natural* Religion, as well the *credenda* as *agenda*, the Doctrines as the Duties of it; both which are contained in that *Revelation* of his Will which God hath made to the World, to which it hath superadded fundry Doctrines and Duties of *supernatural* Religion.

But *strictly* speaking, *revealed* Religion as it is distinguished from *natural*, consists of such Doctrines and Duties as are knowable and discoverable *only* by *Revelation*; as are not to be *deduced* and *inferred* by reasoning and Discourse from any
necessary

necessary or natural Principles, but wholly depend upon the *counsel* and *good Will* of God. And where things depend intirely upon God's *Will*, and their Being or not Being lies wholly in his *free disposal*, it is impossible that our natural Reason should ever arrive at the knowledge of them without some *Revelation* of his Will concerning them. For in such matters as these where the Will of God is absolutely *free*, Reason without Revelation hath neither *necessary* nor *probable* Causes and Principles to argue from, and therefore can make neither *certain* Conclusions nor so much as *probable* guesses concerning them, but must necessarily remain altogether in the dark till such time as God hath *revealed* to it which way his Will is *determined*; and of such matters as these consists all revealed Religion *strictly* so called. For though God hath made *sundry* Revelations of his Will, yet the *subject matter* of them was for the *Main* always the *same*, viz. the Doctrine of the *Mediation* of Jesus Christ, and the Duties that are *subsequent* thereunto, which from that Promise which God made to *Adam* upon his Fall, *the seed of the Woman shall break the Serpents head*, to the last promulgation of the *Gospel*, hath been the great *Theme* of all divine Revelation. For what else was that Revelation which God made to *Abraham*, *in thy seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed*, but only the *dawning* of the *Gospel*? which is nothing but glad tidings of the *Mediator*. What was the Law of *Moses* but only the same *Gospel* shining through a *Cloud* of Types and *symbolical* Representations; and what are all the succeeding *Prophecies* of the Old Testament but only the same Gospel

Gospel still shining *clearer and clearer* till at last it broke forth in its *Meridian brightness*? And were this a proper place, I think I could easily demonstrate that from *Adam* to *Moses*, from *Moses* to the *Prophets*, from the *Prophets* to *Jesus Christ*, the main *Scope* and *Design* of all Divine Revelation, hath been the gradual *Discovery* of this great *Mystery* of the *Mediation*. So that revealed Religion was for the *matter* of it always the *same*, though it was not always revealed with the same *Perspicuity*, but *clear'd up* by degrees from an obscure *Twi-light* to a perfect *Day*. Wherefore *Christianity* which in strictness is nothing but the *Doctrine of the Mediation* together with its appendant *Duties*, ought not to be look'd on as a *new Religion* of 1600 years Date, for in reality 'tis as *ancient* as the *Fall*, and was *then* Preached to *Adam* in that *dark* and *Mysterious* Promise; after which it was a little *more* clearly repeated, though very obscurely *still*, in God's Covenant with *Abraham*; and again, after that it was much more *amply* revealed in the *Types* and *Figures* of the Law of *Moses*, which yet like painted Glass in a Window did under their Pompous Shew still *darken* and obscure the holy *Mysteries* within them, which were nothing but the *Doctrines* and *Laws* of the Christian Religion. So that *Judaism* was only *Christianity veil'd*, and *Christianity* is only *Judaism revealed*.

Thus the *Religion* of the *Mediator*, you see, was the principal *Subject* of all divine *Revelation*; and this *without* Revelation natural Reason could never have *discovered*, because the whole of it depended upon the *free will* of God. For whe-

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ther he would admit of *any* Mediator or no; whether he would admit his *own Son* to be our Mediator or no; whether he would deposit such inestimable Blessings for us or no in the hands of our Mediator, was intirely left to his *free* Determination; and there was no *necessary* cause either *within* or *without* him, no nor any *probable* one neither, that humane Reason could ever have *discovered*, that could *incline* or *determine* him one way or t' other. So that till such time that he *revealed* his Will to us, we were left utterly in the *dark* as to this matter, and had no manner of Principles to *argue* from, or so much as to *guess* by. This therefore is strictly the *revealed* Religion as it stands in opposition to the *natural*. But since together with revealed Religion God hath put forth a *second Edition* of natural, which was almost *lost* and grown out of *Print* through the wretched Negligence and Stupidity of Mankind; and since he hath not only revealed them *together*, but also incorporated them into *one*; Religion as it is now framed and constituted by this happy *Conjunction* of natural with revealed, may be thus defined, *It is the Obligation of Rational Creatures to render such Acts of Worship to God through Jesus Christ as he himself hath instituted, and as are in their own Natures futable to his Excellencies and their dependence upon him.* Where by *acts of Worship*, I do not mean such only as are *immediately* directed to and terminated upon God, as all those are which are contained in the first Table of the Decalogue; but all those acts *in general* which God hath *commanded*, which being performed upon a *Religious* account, that is, out
of

of *Homage* and *Obedience* to God's Will and Authority, are as *truly* and *properly* acts of Worship to him as *Prayer* or *Praise* or *Adjuration*.

And now having given this short account of the nature of Religion, it will from hence be easie to collect what *Principles* are necessary to the *founding* and *securing* its Obligations; for

First, God being the great *Object* of all Religion, it must be absolutely necessary in order to our being truly Religious that we *believe* that God *is*.

Secondly, Religion being an *Obligation* of us to God; that this Obligation may take effect upon us, it is necessary we should believe that he *concerns* himself about us, and consequently that he *governs* the World by his *Providence*.

Thirdly, Religion obliging us to render all due *Acts of Worship* to him, to *inforce* this Obligation upon us, it is necessary we should believe that he will certainly *reward* us if we *render* those acts to him, and as certainly *punish* us if we do *not*.

Fourthly, These acts of Worship which Religion obliges us to, being such as are *suitable* to the Excellency of God's Nature, to enable us to *fulfil* this Obligation it is necessary we should have *right Apprehensions* of the Nature of God.

Fifthly, Religion obliging us to render all these Acts of Worship to God *in* and *through* Jesus Christ

Christ, to our performing this it is necessary we should believe in his *Mediation*.

These are the great *Principles* in which all the Obligations of Religion are *founded*; and therefore in order to the through *fixing* those *Obligations* upon mens Minds, it will be necessary before we proceed to the particular Duties which Religion obliges us to, to discourse of these Principles distinctly.

CHAP.

C H A P. III.

Of the necessity of believing that God is, in order to Mens being truly Religious.

HE that cometh unto God, saith the Apostle, *must believe that God is*, Heb. 11. 6. where by coming to God is meant *Worshiping* him, that is, expressing our *Veneration* of, and *Affection* to him, by outward and visible *Signs* and *Actions*; and unless our outward *Actions* in Religion proceed from an inward *Veneration* of, and *Affection* to him, they are not *Worship* but *Mockery*; but how is it possible a man should inwardly *venerate* God, when he *believes* there is no such Being in the World? For how *real* soever any thing may be *in itself*, if we *believe* it is not, it is to us as if it *were* not; and therefore tho God doth so *necessarily* exist, as that he cannot *but* be, the very *Notion* of him implying an *infinite* distance from *not-being*; yet while we *believe* he is not our *Thoughts* can be no more concern'd about him, than about purchasing an *Inheritance* in *Utopia*. So that this Proposition that *God is*, is the *prime Fundamental* of all Religion, and if this be *removed*, Religion must *sink*, and all its *Sacred Obligations* fly in *sunder*. But this is so *self-evident* that it would be very *impertinent*

to *insist* upon the Proof of it. All that I shall do therefore in pursuance of this Argument shall be to endeavour to establish the *Belief* of this *fundamental* Truth upon which all Religion depends; and that First, by inquiring into, and removing the *Causes* of mens *Infidelity* in this matter; Secondly, by representing the *Folly* and *Unreasonableness* of it. For as for the *Proofs* and *Evidences* of God's *Being*, I shall reserve them till I come to discourse of his *Providence*, where I think there is enough said to satisfy any man that is not desperately hardned against all Conviction.

S E C T. I.

Of the Causes of Atheism; shewing the great Absurdity and Unreasonableness of them.

CONSIDERING how loudly the Voice of *Nature*, the Consent of *Nations*, and the beautiful *Structure* and *Contrivance* of things do proclaim the Being of God, one would think it impossible there should be any such Monster as an *Atheist* among *reasonable* Beings; and indeed it hath been warmly disputed among the Learned whether there be any such or no? A Question, which these later Ages have determined in the *Affirmative*, by an *Induction* of too many woful Instances. But doubtless had men impartially attended to the *Dictates* of *Reason*, and not delivered themselves up to the *Infatuation* of their *Lusts*, and the in-

veterate

veterate *Prejudice* of a corrupt *Imagination*, it would have been impossible for so many gross *Absurdities* as *Atheism* implies, to have entred into their minds; but when once mens *Wills* and *Affections* have espoused a Proposition, they will make one shift or other, be it never so absurd, to impose it on their *Understandings*; and considering how many *Causes* there are leading men to *Atheism* who are *predisposed* thereunto, I cannot think an *Atheist* to be so great a *Wonder*. For so long as mens *Understandings* are led by their *Wills*, and their *Wills* are *byassed* with inclinations to *Impiety*, they can hardly forbear *wishing* there were no God; and then from *wishing* there were none, to *believing* there is none, will be a very short and easie *Transition*. Since therefore their *Atheism* proceeds not so much from the Defect of their *Reason* as from the fault of their *Wills*, perhaps the most effectual way to cure it, is rather to *detect* and *remove* those faulty *Causes* in their *Wills*, than to attempt upon their *Reason* with the *Proofs* and *Demonstrations* of a Deity. And accordingly you see that when God had once *erected* this goodly *Theatre* of Beings, and *imprinted* on it so many glorious *Characters* of his own *Power*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, tho from time to time he hath wrought *innumerable Miracles*, to reduce men from *Superstition*, *Idolatry* and *Wickedness*. yet he never wrought *one* to reduce them from *Atheism*. And indeed to what purpose should he? it being highly improbable that they who will not be convinced of the Being of God by this *standing Miracle*, the *World*, in which there are so many ample *Demonstrations* of his Being, should

be convinc'd of it by any other Miracles; for other Miracles are only the *Disorders* and *Interruptions* of Nature; and certainly the regular *Course* and standing *Order* of Nature, is a much more glorious Evidence of God's *Wisdom* and *Power*; than the most miraculous *Interruptions* and *Disorders* of it. And therefore if men will be *Atheists* notwithstanding God hath imprinted so many *Proofs* of his Being on this visible Creation, 'tis plain it is not their *Reason* but their *Wills* that make them so; and if so, to what purpose is it to urge their Reason with the *Arguments* of God's Being? since if they will not listen to those that are round about them, and are every where to be found in the great *Volume* of Nature, it is highly improbable that even *Miracles* themselves, which are God's peculiar *Arguments* (and are therefore called the *Demonstrations* of his Spirit) should ever be able to persuade them. Wherefore to put a stop to this *Pestilential* Disease, which in these later Ages hath been so *fatally* propagated among all Degrees and Orders of Men, I conceive the most proper way is to *discover* and *remove* those faults in their *Wills* which have such a malevolent Influence on their *Understandings*; and the principal ones may be reduced to these nine Heads.

I. A perverse *Opposition* of Will to the Will and Nature of God.

II. Superstitious *Misapprehensions* concerning God.

III. Precipitant *Rashness* in prescribing to, and *prejudging* the Divine Providence.

IV. Vain

IV. Vain Affections of *Singularity* in Opinion.

V. Custom of *Drolling on*, and *Ridiculing* the most serious things.

VI. Taking up our Religion, or Opinions in Religion, without *Examination*.

VII. Measuring the *Truth* or *Falshood* of Religion by the *Practice* of such as make high *Pre-
tences* to it.

VIII. Placing Religion in the little *Opinions* that constitute the *Sects* and *Parties* we are engaged in.

IX. Profane and careless *Neglect* of *Publick
Worship*.

I. One great cause of Atheism is the perverse *Opposition* of Mens Wills to the Will and Nature of God. For the natural Notion which men have of God is, that he is a most *pure* and *holy* Being, infinitely removed by the Perfection of his Nature from all *Inclinations* that are *contrary* to the Dictates of *right Reason*. And accordingly in all those *Declarations* which he hath made of his Will, they find him expressing an high *De-
testation* of all immorality and wickedness, and commanding them to abstain from it under the most dreadful *Penalties*, which they know he hath both *Right* and *Power* to inflict when he pleases. Notwithstanding which, presuming on his *Goodness*, and a *future Repentance*, they suffer themselves to be *tempted* and *seduced* into wickedness; the pleasure of which *tolls* them on from one wickedness to another, till their Wills are *capti-
vated* by Custom to inveterate *Habits* of Sinning.

So that *now* their *Sense* of God, and of his Almighty Displeasure being no longer able to *master* the stubbornness of their Wills, only serves to *fret* and *disturb* them, to raise *Terrors* and *Anxieties* in their Consciences, and therewithal to *im-bitter* the pleasure of their Sin. For so long as this *Sense* remains alive in their Bosoms, they can never hope to sin *quietly* for it; and it being so, they have no other remedy but either to part with *that* or their *Sins*. For while they *retain* their *Sins*, the Belief of a God will grow an intolerable *Vexation* to them, unless by *sophisticating* their Belief with false Notions of Religion they can *temper* into an *amicable* compliance with their Lusts. And this is usually the Artifice of the *duller* sort of People whose Understandings are more *easily* imposed on, *viz.* to intermingle with their Belief of a God such Notions of Religion as may render it *favourable* and *propitious* to our Lusts. And hence I doubt not sprang most of those *wicked* Doctrines which from time to time have been *foisted* into Christianity, from the Desire which men have to *accommodate* the difference between their Consciences and their wicked Wills, and reconcile their natural *sense* of God to their *Sins*. But alas, these Artifices are all so *thin* and *transparent*, that 'tis a hard matter for Men of Wit to *impose* them on their Understandings; and tho' they have an equal *Good will* to these wicked Doctrines with the *duller* sort of Sinners, yet their Reason is too sharp-sighted to be *chous'd* and *deceived* by them. And therefore usually they go another way to work, and being sensible that they can never enjoy their sins in *quiet*, while they are

awed

awed with the *Sense* and *Belief* of a Deity, and yet obstinately resolved that they *will* enjoy them, they have no other Expedient but to muster up all their Wit and Reason to dispute the belief of a God out of their Minds; and being *stifly* resolved to persist in their wickedness, they are obliged by their own *Interest* to wish there were no God to *observe and punish* them. And then *facile credunt quod volunt*, they easily believe what they would have, and the *slenderest* probability will sway their Understanding to vote on the side of their *Interest* and *Affections*. So that when men are *resolved* to be wicked, Atheism is their *Interest* and *Refuge*, to which they are many times forced to fly in their own Defence, to avoid the Clamors and Persecutions of their Consciences. Had these men lived in those good *Pagan* days wherein they might have *rioted* with Devotion, *Sacrificed* to the gods in drunken Bowls, and *Worship'd* in the Arms of a Strumpet, no men would have been more religious than they; and could they *now* but *Compound* the matter so as that God should let *them* alone to enjoy their *Lusts*, there is no doubt but they would be well enough content to let *him* alone to enjoy his *Being*. But because their sense of him *frets and galls* them, they first grow impatient under it, and then set their Wits at Work to raise Objections against it, and either to *laugh* or *dispute* it out of their Minds. And accordingly *Plato* makes mention of a sort of Atheists οἱς ἂν πρὸς τῇ δόξῃ, τῇ θεῶν ἔρημια εἶναι πάντα, ἀκράτειαί τε ἡδονῶν καὶ λυπῶν προσπίπτωσι, μνημαὶ τὰ ἰχυρὰ καὶ μαθήσεις ὅξεαι παρῶσι; who in consequence of their Opinion that all things are void of Gods, have

plunged themselves into intemperance of Pleasures and Pains, being otherwise persons of great Memories and quick Understandings, *De Leg. Lib. 10.* But alas, how unreasonable is it in a matter of such vast importance for men to *believe* by their *Interest* and *Affections*! 'tis true, could men put out the Sun with *winking*, or extinguish the Nature of things by an obstinate disbelief of them, it would be very justifiable for those men to *believe* there is no God whose *Interest* it is that there *should* be none. But alas, the Natures of things are *unalterable*, and will be what they are whatsoever our *Opinion* is about them. If there *be* a God, there *will* be one, whether we think fit to *believe* it or no; and tho when the Interest of our Lusts requires it, we may possibly *dispute* our selves out of the *Belief* of his Being, yet he is not to be disputed out of his *Being*. We may indeed secure our selves from the *Dread* of his Vengeance, by Disputing our selves into a *disbelief* of him, but we can never *secure* our selves by it from the *danger* of his Vengeance. And what a senseless thing is it for a man to shut his eyes against an unavoidable danger, merely for fear of being *frightened* by it; and when he might *shun* God's Vengeance by *dreading* it, instead thereof to shun the *dread* of it? What is this but to set his Reason at work to rock his Conscience asleep, that so he may destroy himself without *fear* or *disturbance*.

II. Another great Cause of Atheism is superstitious *Misapprehensions* concerning God; which though they are lodged in the *Mind*, yet are most commonly exhaled from the *Affections*, that like impure Fogs do generally breath up all those *Meteors*

teers that *darken* and *disturb* the Region above. And indeed most of our ill apprehensions of God are *transcribed* and *copied* from our own Affections; which be they never so *irregular*, our own self-love will be apt to celebrate for *Perfections*. And then whatsoever we esteem a Perfection in *our selves*, we naturally attribute to *God*, who is the Source and Standard of all Perfection; and those Affections of our own Nature which we most injuriously attribute to God, we love or hate in *him* according as we love or hate them in *other men*. Thus the *fond* and *indulgent*, who are apt to *doat* upon others without reason, and to *hug* even their Vices and Deformities, are prone to attribute their own temper to God, and to look upon him as a Being that is infinitely *indulgent* to those whom *without* any reason he hath *chosen* for his Favourites. And because he who is fond of *others*, loves others should be fond of *him*, to be sure he will love his *fond* God too, and be far more devoutly affected towards the *Idol* of his own temper, than to the *true* God himself cloathed in all the native Glory of his own Attributes. But on the contrary, those who are *stern* and *peevish* and *implacable* can by no means indure their own temper in *others*; and therefore 'tis no wonder if they hate it in *God*, to whom they are wont injuriously to attribute it. For how is it possible for them to *affect* a Divinity, whom they have pictured in their own Minds with such a *stern* and *terrible* Aspect, with an *Imperious* Self-will that bears down all things before it by *irresistible* Might without any Respect to *Right* or *Wrong*, with *bloody* hands and a *Vengeful* heart,
and

and a *testy*, *peevish* and *unaccountable* Nature that *loves* and *hates* without any reason; and is *pleased* or *displeased* as the *toy* takes it. And having thus set up such a *grim* Idol of God in their Minds as they can by no means affect, they secretly *wish* there were no such Being, which is the *brink* of Atheism. Thus their ghastly Apprehensions of God meeting with the *surly* and *churlish* temper within them, instead of moulding them into Devotion to him, commonly *inrage* and *canker* them with Malice against him; and accordingly *Plutarch*, well observes, *ἐκ οὐσίας θεὸς εἶναι ὁ ἀθεῖς, ὁ δὲ θεοῦ δαίμονος ἔβληται*, i. e. the Atheist thinks there is no God, and he who hath dreadful Apprehensions of him *wishes* there were none; and he who *wishes* there were none is but one remove from *believing* there is none. Thus you see in what a direct Line *Vice* leads to *Superstition*, and *Superstition* to *Atheism*. For *Pride* and *Wrath*, *Malice* and *Revenge* are naturally apt to ingender in mens Minds *horrid* and *frightful* Apprehensions of God; which working on those *sour* and *rugged* Passions that begot them are as apt to *exasperate* and *inrage* them against him; and then their *Reason* immediately takes part with their *Passion*, and to gratifie its *wish* that there were no God, sets itself industriously to argue him out of his Being. But alas, what an unreasonable procedure is this, for men to *pin* their faults upon God, and dress him in their own Deformities, and when they have thus *disguised* him by putting upon him their own frightful tempers, as the old Persecutors did the Christians by wrapping them in Lions Skins. to set on their Wit and Reason to *worry* him out

of his Being ; what is this but to make a God as the Heathens did their *Mercuries*, and then fling stones at him ; to transform him into a *Monstrous* Idol and then *dislike* him, and then dash him in pieces ? But be not deceived, God will be what *he is*, a most *perfect*, *glorious*; and *amiable* Being, how inglorious soever he may appear to you through the false *Medium* of your own Diabolical temper, which like *Crimson* coloured Glass will represent the fairest Objects to you *bloody* and *terrible* ; But for you to *hate* God for no other reason but because your own hateful Passions do reflect to you such an inglorious Idea of him, and then to *deny* him because you *hate* him, is equally *impious* and *unreasonable*.

III. Another great cause of Atheism is *Rashness* and *Precipitancy* in *prescribing* to and *prejudging* the divine Providence, and this also most commonly arises from some great *Irregularity* in mens Wills and Affections. For generally the *rash* Judgments which men make of the divine Providence, are grounded on those *unequal* Distributions it makes of the good things of this World in prospering the *Bad* and afflicting the *Good*, upon which we are too often ready to Charge it with being an *unequal* Arbitrator of mens Fates. The occasion of which is our *immoderate* Estimation of the Goods and Evils of this World. We so *inhance* the Goods of it in our Opinions, as to think them *great* enough to be the *Crown* and *Reward* of Virtue ; and have such horrible Apprehensions of the Evils of it, as to imagine them *great* enough to be the *Plagues* and *Punishments* of the most *obstinate* and *notorious* Offenders.

Where-

Whereas by the whole Course of his Providence it appears that God hath a different esteem of them *both*; that he thinks the *best* things of this World to be *bad* enough to be thrown away upon the most despicable persons; and therefore to express his Scorn of these *admirable* Vanities, he many times scatters them with a *careless* hand, as not thinking it worth the while to be so *exact* in the Distribution of them, as to put them in Gold Scales, and weigh them out to Mankind by *Grains* and *Scruples*. And as for the *worst* things of this World, he thinks them not so *bad* but that they may be indured without any considerable Damage to the Sufferer; and therefore many times suffers them to befall his own *Favourites*, as not thinking it of Moment enough to interpose his Providence to shield them against their *impotent* Impressions. And upon this difference of Judgment men too often ground an *inveterate* Quarrel against God, and because they *doat* upon this World, and think the Goods of it *good* enough to be the Portion of good Men, and the Evils of it *bad* enough to be the Punishment of bad, they are angry with God for not being of *their* Opinion, and are ready to *arraign* his Providence, and to conclude that this World is govern'd by a *blind* Chance that drops her Favours at random, as the full plumed Hawk mews her loose Feathers, and never cares who stoops to take them up. And this *Ovid* ingeniously acknowledges himself:

*Dum rapiunt mala fata bonos, ignoscite fasso.
Sollicitos nullos esse putare Deos; i. e.*

While

While I behold ill Fates attend good men, I am tempted to think there are no gods.

*Marmoreo Licinius tumulo jacet, at Cato parvo,
Pompeius nullo, quis putet esse Deos?*

The wicked Licinus lies in a Marble Tomb, but Cato in a small one, and Pompey in none, who would think there were gods?

So also there are others, who beholding themselves in the *flattering* Mirror of their own self-conceit, are so taken with the Reflections of their own *Merit* and *Excellency*, as that they cannot see how 'tis possible but that if there be a God he must *love* and *reward* them; and therefore if instead of so doing, God either *deprives* them of those worldly Goods which they *doat* on, or *frustrates* them of those carnal Hopes for whose Accomplishment they have *earnestly* supplicated, they presently begin to murmur against him, and thence proceed to *arraign* the Justice of his Providence, and thence to *deny* both *that* and his *Being*. For thus it comes to pass, saith *Simplicius*, that such who have no grounded Belief of a Deity, when they observe the Miseries of *good* Men, and the Prosperities of *bad*, are without any Regard to the common Notions of God, ready to cry out with him in the *Tragedian*, Τολμῶ καλεῖσθ' ἄν μή ποτ' ἔσιν θεοὶ, κακοὶ γὰρ εὐτυχῶντες ἐμπλήτισόν με, i. e. *I dare affirm there are no gods, because the wicked prosper that hurt me.* Thus from their fond Affection to these worldly Goods, men frequently take occasion to *quarrel* with God's Providence, for not appropriating them to be the Rewards of Virtue; and being once engaged in a

Quarrel

Quarrel against his *Providence*, their next attempt is to dispute him out of his *Being*.

But what an unreasonable way of concluding is this? I value this to be best and that to be worst, and therefore God ought to be of *my* Opinion, and to proceed accordingly to his Providence over the World: and there is nothing *can* be better or worse within the Prospect of an infinite Wisdom than what I *apprehend* to be best and worst for Mankind; and therefore if he will do good to the Good, it must be in the Method that I shall prescribe him, that is to say, he must *crown* them with Rose buds, and *cloath* them in Purple, and *feed* them with the fat of the Land; and if he punish the Wicked he must give *me* leave to give aim to his Arrows, and to *direct* him *how*, and *what*, and *when*, and *where* to shoot, and so long I am *contented* to allow him a Being in the World; but if he will presume to cross *my* Opinion of things, and steer his Actions by the unerring Compass of his own infinite Wisdom; if he will rather choose to do good to the Good by *chastening* than by *prospering* them, and to *avenge* himself upon the Wicked by *fattening* them with Prosperity for Slaughter, I shall look upon it as such an Affront to *my* judgment as will admit of no *meaner* Expiation than the *stripping* him out of his Providence and Being. And what can be more ridiculous than for man to *deny* the Being of God, because his *Providence* sometimes crosses their foolish Opinion of things, and doth not govern it self by the *crooked* Rules which they are pleased to prescribe it.

IV. Another great cause of Atheism is vain *Affectation of Singularity* in Opinion; a Vice that hath been always incident to men of *Speculation*, who valuing themselves upon the stock of their Knowledge and deep Insight into the Nature of things, have always affected to start new Notions and *advance* contrary Hypotheses to the received Opinions of Mankind, that so they may be vogueed for Men of *singular* Knowledge, and seem to have *taller* Understandings than the rest of their Brethren. And this I doubt not hath been one great cause of *speculative Atheism*; for there is no Principle in Nature which hath been more *universally* received among Men than the Belief of a Deity, which doubtless is the main Reason why men who affect Singularity have been so prone to *quarrel* at it. It doth not comport with their Design of being thought *wiser* than the rest of the World, to submit their Understandings to *common* Notions and *universal* Doctrines; because should they think as *other* Men do, they might probably be thought no wiser. Perhaps had the Belief of a Deity been *lately* started, and only received by some *singular* Sect of Vertuosoës, these men might have been as forward to *entertain* it as they are now to *reject* it; but because it is an *Old-fashion* Doctrine, in which all Ages and Nations have *concurred*, they think it would be a *discredit* to their Understanding to *wear* it, and therefore they set their Wits at work to invent Atheistical Hypotheses to solve the *Phænomena* of Nature without a Deity. And he that doth but impartially consider the *haughty* Genius of those Philosophers that laid the Foundations of *Speculative Atheism*,

theism, may easily perceive that the great Motive of their Infidelity was nothing but a proud *Affectation* of thinking counter to Mankind. And indeed could I but embrace the Doctrine of the *Transmigration* of Souls, I should be tempted to believe by the *likeness* of their Humours that it was one and the same Soul that pass'd through *Democritus* into *Protagoras*, through *Protagoras* into *Epicurus*, and through *Epicurus* into Mr. *Hobbs*; And since they so exactly agreed in their *Pride* and haughty *Ostentation* of Knowledge, it is justly supposable that this was the *main* cause of their *Agreement* in Atheism; which being a *Singular* Doctrine, and directly contradictory to the *common* Notions of Mankind, was upon that account more adapted to the humour of these *arrogant* Philosophers. And accordingly *Plato* describes the Atheists of his Age to be a *conceited* and *scornful* sort of People, and declares the cause of their Atheism to be ἀμάθεια μάλα χαλεπὴ δοῦσα εἶναι, μέγιστη φερόντως, a certain pernicious sort of ignorance that put on a semblance of the greatest Wisdom: and afterwards he calls Atheism ἡ πρὸς πολλοῖς δεξαζόμενον εἶναι σοφώτατον πάντων λόγων, that which in the Eyes of some conceited People seemed to be the wisest of all Doctrines, *de Leg. Lib. 10.* And because these Atheistical Philosophers, who were some of them great Masters of Wit and Learning, had the good luck to be *remarked* and *gazed* on like so many *Anticks* for their Singularity, they have always found Disciples and Followers among the People of little Sense, and a great deal of Vainety, who being ambitious of the Reputation of Wits and Philosophers, but having neither Brains

nor *Industry* enough to merit it, are fain to shelter their Ignorance in Atheism, and there to face it out with *laughter* and *boldness*; and because by laughing at God and Religion they deride the common Faith of Mankind, they fanſie themselves ſingularly *witty*, and expect that others ſhould fanſie them ſo too; whereas in reality theſe *little People* are but mere *Pretenders* to ſpeculative Atheism. For before they can be *more*, they muſt comprehend the whole System of the Atheiſtical Philoſophy, and be able to deſcribe all thoſe ſuppoſed Laws of *Motion*, by which *Matter* without the Conduct of a *Superior* Wiſdom and Power did originally range it ſelf into this beautiful World; and to ſhew at leaſt the poſſibility of all the ſtrange *Appearances* in Nature, without ſuppoſing a God; which is ſuch a task as their *feeble* Underſtandings durſt never attempt; for the utmoſt they can pretend to is a few Terms of the *Atheiſtical Philoſophy*, which they have learned by *rote*, and do *cant* and *ſmatter* with as much Skill and Underſtanding as Parrots do the Leſſons that are taught them. And tho the brisk young Gentlemen will ſometimes *boldly* affirm, and if you dare take them up will lay a *Wager* on it too, that *Reason* is nothing but a *Train* of *Imaginations*; that *Choice* is nothing but the *laſt ſtroke* of outward Objects on the *Fancy*; and that there is nothing in Nature but *Matter* and *Motion*; yet ſhould you be ſo rude as to ask them what they mean by theſe Phraſes, you would *uncaſe* their Ignorance and utterly *undo* them. So that ſuch as theſe are only the *Hawkers* and *Retailers* of Atheism, that *noiſe* and *cry* it about; but have neither Wit nor *Indu-*
H *ſtry*

stry enough to *understand* it, but do take it up with the same *implicit* Faith as the Papists do their Religion. Thus as the *Ambition* of being accounted *wiser* than others, causes men to affect *Singularity* in their opinions, so the *affectation* of Singularity in Opinion doth very often transport men into *Atheism*.

Now tho I would by no means plead for mens *enslaving* their Understanding to *vulgar* Opinions, so as to put a *stop* to all Advancements of *Knowledge*, and hinder the World from ever growing *wiser*; yet doubtless for men to *quarrel* at Opinions for no other reason but *because* they are *vulgarly* received, is not only a rude *Affront* to the Reason of mankind; but also an effectual way to involve our selves in an endless *Labyrinth* of mistakes. For while I *affect* to be singular in my Opinion, I *deprive* my self of the Assistance of *other* mens Understandings, and in my travail for Knowledge chuse rather to go *alone* by my self through *untrodden* by-ways, than to keep the *Road*, and follow the *Tract* of those that have gone before em. So that unless I am *wiser* than all the World, which is very *unlikely*, it is a thousand to one but I *bewilder* and *lose* my self; for how *wise* and *sagacious* soever I may be, it is certain that *many* Heads are *wiser* than *one*; and therefore when all Heads *concur* in the same judgment, it is *probable* at least that that Judgment is *true*; he therefore who rejects an Opinion because *all* or *most* do imbrace it, *affects* to think counter to the *strongest* Evidence, and to believe against the *greatest* Probability. 'Tis true in many things the generality of men have been *mistaken*, which

is a sufficient reason why we should not *pin* our Faith upon the Sleeve of *Vulgar* Opinions, but impartially *examine* before we confidently *embrace* them; but yet there is a Reverence due to the *Judgment of Mankind*, and the Laws of *Majesty* require us not to be *confident* against it without very great reason; but to *affect* to run counter to it, especially in such a matter of moment as the *Belief* or *Disbelief* of a Duty, is not only the highest *Arrogance* but the most extravagant *Madness*. For it is *at least* probable that there is a God, because *all* Mankind do believe one, and if there *be* one, it is of *infinite* Moment that we should *believe* it, and *act* accordingly; and therefore for men to turn Atheists out of mere *Singularity*, is not only to believe there is *no* God, because it is probable there *is*, but to *play* and *dally* with ones own Fate, and run the *hazard* of being eternally miserable out of a *wanton* Affectation of *contradicting* the Judgment of Mankind.

V. Another great cause of Atheism is Custom of *drolling on* and *ridiculing* the most *serious* things; a humour which hath strangely prevailed in this *pleasant* and *jocular* Age, wherein the wild *ravings* of mens Fancies into *odd* Similitudes, *startling* Metaphors, *humorous* Expressions, and *sportive* Representations of things are grown more acceptable in almost all Conversations, than the most *solid* Reason and Discourse, and 'tis generally look'd upon as a far more *genteel* and *fashionable* Quality for a man to be *witty* than *Wise*. Now though I do not deny but that Wit in it self is a very *usefull* and *valuable* Indowment, and serves to many *excellent* purposes; as namely to

polish and adorn the most serious Truths, and represent them to mens Minds in the most comely and affecting Dresses; to expose what is apparently base and ridiculous, and lash it with the Satyrs it makes against it self; to quicken and give life to a solid Argument, and render it more piercing and convictive; and in a word, to indear our Society, and give a relish and piquancy to our Conversation, and to recreate our minds after we have been tired and cloyed with severer Occupations; though Wit, I say, be a very useful Quality as to all these good purposes, yet unless a wise man hath the keeping it, that knows when and where and how to apply it, it is like Wild-fire that flies at rovers, runs hissing about, and blows up every thing that comes in its way without any respect or discrimination. And indeed the more grave and serious any thing is, the more prone it will be to expose and ridicule it. For the life of Wit consists in the surprisingness of its Conceits and Expressions, in making such smart or uncouth Representations of Things as are most apt to raise a pleasing Wonder and Amazement in those that hear us. Now there is nothing more surprising in its own nature, than to see or hear a serious thing sportfully represented, and dress'd up in an antick and ridiculous Disguise; the very exposing it in a Garb and Figure so unexpected, because so very unlike and unsuitable to it self, is apt of its own Nature to surprise and amuse the Spectators or Hearers; which surprise, if he be a vain person, will tickle him in Laughter, but if he be serious, will affect him with Detestation and Horror to see a serious thing so contemptibly treated. But the

greatest

greatest part of Men being of *vain* and *trifling* Spirits that are *whiffled* up and down in little *levities* of Fancy, there is nothing commonly doth more *gratefully* surprise them and provoke their *Laughter*, that *ridiculous* Representations of *serious* Arguments; and hence it comes to pass that 'tis grown a great Instance of wit among the generality of men to *sport* and *play* with *serious* things, to *burlesque* the sense of them, and apply them to *ridiculous* purposes; wherein in reality this *mistaken* sort of Wit is nothing but *dull* and *impudent* Buffoonery, and a very little Wit joyned with a *great deal* of Sauciness will enable a man to make *sport* with the most serious Arguments. For 'tis but *cloathing* them in *rude* and *porterly* Expressions, or *misconstruing* them to a *profane* or *ludicrous* sense, or *debauching* the Phrases by which they are expressed to a *silly* or a *wicked* meaning, and it shall be presently *cried up* for an excellent Jest, and the Author of it dubb'd a *Wit Laureat*. This therefore being so easie a way for *dull* people to advance themselves to the Reputation of *Wits*, hath of *late years* especially been mightily frequented by the *impotent* well-wishers to Wit and Ingenuity; and because *Religion* hath been always esteemed the *most serious* thing in the World, therefore they fix upon *that* as the common Theme of their *Raillery*, considering that the *more serious* it is, the more it will surprise men to hear it *burlesqued* and *drolled on*. So that if they do but *speak slightly* and *irreverently* of God, or never so *clownishly* ridicule a *Mystery* of Religion, or cloath an *obscene* Thought in a *Text* of Scripture, their *Sauciness* will supply the defect of their *Wit*,

and men will laugh not so much at the *Piquancy* of their Conceit, as at the *Boldness* and *Presumption* of it: and because their Discourse hath the *luck* to be *laughed* at, they think themselves *celebrated* for the *Oracles* of Wit, and are thereby emboldned to *proceed* in their *impious* Buffoonery, till at last they have drolled themselves into a *Contempt* of God, and from thence into downright *Atheism*. For tho a *Jest* be no *Argument*, nor yet a *loud laughter* a *Demonstration*, yet if you inspect the generality of our little *Pretenders* to *Atheism*, you will find *this* is the main Foundation that their Irreligion depends on; for their gift consists not in *arguing* and *demonstrating*. but in such a *Set* and *fine* Phrases and *terse* Oaths; and all the Stock of Learning they pretend to is a few *shavings* of Wit gathered out of *Plays* and *Romances*, and these they *pin* upon *Religion*, as you have seen unhappy Boys do rags at mens backs, to *expose* it to Scorn and Derision; and having accustomed themselves to treat it with such *rude* and *porterly* Contempt and *Disingenuity*, it grows by degrees *cheap* and *vile* in their Eyes, and at last is rejected by them as a *ridiculous Imposture*; and if *now* when they are urged with *Evidences* of Religion, they have but wit enough to answer *Reason* with *Drollery*, and to retort a *Jest* to a *Demonstration*, how *gloriously* do they imagine they have acquitted themselves, and with what *triumphant* Shrugs do they celebrate their Victory over the *little Man in black*.

Now tho for men to *deride* what they do not *understand*, favours neither of *Learning* nor good *Manners*, and is equally unbecoming a *Gentleman* and

and a *Scholar*; and tho for a man to venture to be *damned* for deriding of God and Religion, is such a Triumph of *Wit* as argues the utter Defeat of his *Reason*, yea so long as there are *vain* men enough to be *tickled* with this profane sort of Drollery; to be sure there will never want *Fools* enough to *venture* on it. For when a *Fop* will needs aspire to the Reputation of a *Wit*, he hath no other way but to dress up Religion in a *Fools Coat*, and expose it for a Spectacle of *Derision*, and then how *dull* soever the Conceit be, the stupendous *Presumption* of it will *surprise* and *amuse* the Company, and men will *admire* him just as they do *Rope dancers* for *daring* to perform what a wise man would *tremble* to attempt; and being thus emboldend by the *Admiration* and *Laughter* of his Company, which the *vain* Creature mistakes for a *Proof* and *Evidence* of his wit, he grows more *pert* and *confident*, and so *fools* and *fleers* on till he hath *toyed* and *laughed* himself out of all sense of Religion.

But alas! what a *desperate* piece of *Folly* is this, for men thus to *sport* and *dally* with the Almighty, whose vengeance they can neither *withstand* nor *endure*; to *point* and *make mouths* at him to his face, and set him up as the Finger-butt of their *Scorn* and *Derision*! For certainly if there be Sins that can raise a Cry *loud* enough to reach Heaven, *this*, as a great Author of our own hath expressed it, will be so far from *whispering* there, that 'twill give an *Alarm* to the Vengeance of Heaven, whose *Inflictions* like stones tumbling from the tops of Towers, will by so much the more *fatally* crush those they light on, by how much the *longer* they are

falling upon them. And therefore for Men thus to dally with their own *Fate*, to venture to be damn'd that they may be thought to be witty, and expose themselves to endless wailing and wo, only to raise a present fit of *Laughter*, is doubtless a far more desperate Attempt than 'twould be to play at the mouths of Canons while they are spitting fire, or to lay hold on a Thunderbolt as it comes roaring down from the Clouds.

But suppose there were neither *Evil* nor *Danger* in this impious Practice, yet for men to conclude there is no God, because they have the Confidence to scorn and despise him, is altogether as ridiculous as their despising him is impious. For there is nothing in Nature so real or serious but may be drolled and rallied on; if a man will set his Wits at work he may break jests upon Pain, and entertain his Company with Comical Representations of the Groans and Agonies of dying; but it would be a jest indeed should he droll himself into a Belief that there are no such things as Pain or Death; but alas, things are not to be altered by Laughing at them, and how merry soever we may make our selves with the Belief and Notion of a Deity, we shall one day find in earnest that he is not to be jested out of his Being.

VI. Another cause of Atheism is taking up Religion or Opinions in Religion without Examination. The generality of men do embrace their Religion as a part of their Fate, as the Temper of their Clime, or the entail of their Ancestors; and the Reason why they are Christians, is, because Christianity had the luck to bespeak them first, and by its timely Interposure to prepossess and fore-

*st*al them. So that in all probability had *Mahometism* plied them *first*, they would have had as much Faith for the *Alchoran* as they have now for the *Bible*. Now when men thus take up their Religion they know not *why*, their minds must needs be left *naked* and *defenceless* to all the Temptations of Atheism. For when a man can render no *reason* for his Religion, his Faith hath nothing but blind *Prejudice* to support it; and 'tis with his *Will* that he believes, and not with his *Understanding*; so that he may chuse whether he will believe or no, because he hath no *Evidence* to determine his *Understanding*. And how *unstable* and *insecure* must his Faith needs be, when it hath no other Foundation but a *fickle* and *inconstant* Will; when it lies at the mercy of his *Humour* and *Inclinations*, and it is in his power to determine his Assent to *that* side of the Question which is most for his *Interest*? For now his *Faith* being determined by his *Will*, and his will by his *Interest*, whenever he thinks it his Interest that there *should* be no God, to be sure he will be ready enough to believe that there *is* none; and consequently as soon as he grows wicked enough to *need* Atheism for a *Refuge* from his Conscience, he will betake himself *thither* in his own defence, and endeavour by an obstinate *Disbelief* of God's *Being*, to *shelter* himself from the *Dread* of his *Power*. Thus when mens Belief is not grounded upon *Reason* and *Evidence*, but stands *tottering* on the *fickle* Foundation of their *Wills*, it is liable to be *blown down* by every blast of Temptation. And hence I doubt not in a great measure proceeds the *Irreligion* of the Age we live in; for if you survey the present

sent *Sticklers* for Atheism, you will find they chiefly consist of the *hair-brain'd* and *uncatechised* Youths of the Town, who never troubled themselves to understand the first *Principles* of Religion, nor to consider the *Dependence* and *Connexion* of its *Doctrines*, and know nothing at all either of the admirable *Contexture* of the *Parts* of it, or of the *Reason* and *Evidence* of the *Whole*. For alas, their Study hath been employed *another way*, viz. in courtly *Forms* of Speech and *Punctilioes* of Action, in *fashionable* Garbs and Oaths and *artificial* Luxuries, in *conning* of fine Jest's and modes of Address, and *retailing* Fragments of Wit from Plays and Romances; but as for the *severer* and more *useful* Studies, they bequeath them to the *dull* men of *Sense* and *Reason*.

Such as *these* for the most part are the *Sages* that *droll* upon Religion, and *make jests* upon the Scripture; and what wonder is it that such as *these* turn *Infidels*, who are never able to render any *Reason* of their *Faith*? For how *weak* soever the Arguments of *Infidelity* are, it is a hard case if it cannot *baffle* that Faith which hath no Reason on its side to *guard* and *defend* it; especially when they are *seconded* with a mans *Lusts* and *Inclinations*, as to be sure the Arguments of Infidelity will always be. For when a man hath no Reason for his Faith, but a great many Lusts *against* it, the *slenderest* shews of *Probability* will suffice to make him an Infidel. But what an horrible Neglect is it for men that have Reason to *distinguish* between *Truth* and *Falshood*, to take no care to inquire into the *Truth* and *Evidence* of their Religion in which their greatest *Interest* is involved; but to

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wink hard and believe at a venture they know not why or what? what is this but to cast Lots for their Souls, and throw Cross or Pile for their eternal Salvation? They resolve, they say, to adhere to the Religion of their *Ancestors*, but whether that be true or false they never inquire; so that if it be true they may thank their *Stars* for it, but if it be false, they have the worse Luck. Thus they wholly commit themselves to the Conduct of Chance to be conducted to Heaven or Hell, as it happens; and as if those distant Fates were indifferent to them they concern not themselves to inquire whether the way they are in be the Broad or the Narrow, the Right or the Wrong, but e'en leave the Event, to determine it. And can any thing in the World be more wild or extravagant, than for men who are so solicitous about their smaller concerns, who will not purchase an Acre of Land without examining the Deeds and Evidences by which the Right to it is conveyed, thus to take up their Religion upon Trust, and stake their everlasting Fate upon such a desperate venture? But then for Men to take occasion to despise and reject Religion from their own sottish Neglect to inquire into the Truth of it, is such an height of Extravagance as no Bedlam can parallel; it would be as reasonable for a Man to put out his Eyes, and then resolve not to believe there is a Sun in the Firmament, because he doth not see it, or to stop up his Ears, and then peremptorily deny the Being of Sounds, because he do's not hear 'em; for, for Men thus to graft Infidelity upon Ignorance, is only to heap one Extravagance on another; if they understand not the Evidence of Religion, the more

Shame

Shame it is for them, but methinks it might very well become them to be *modest* and *teachable* till they *do*; and in the mean while to take care to *inform* themselves *better*; but then immediately to leap out of *Ignorance* into *Atheism*, is first to play the *Fool* and then run *stark mad* upon it.

VII. Another Cause of *Atheism* is Mens measuring the *Truth* or *Falshood* of Religion by the *Practice* of such as make the loudest *Pretence* to it. When a man is unwilling to undergo the trouble of satisfying his *own Reason* of the truth of his Religion, his usual Method is to *inquire* what *other* men think of it, who by the *zealous* Profession which they make may be supposed to *understand* it better than *himself*; but because Mens Thoughts are *secret* and *invisible*, and do not always *correspond* with their *Words* and *Professions*; therefore to satisfy himself what other men *think* of Religion, he concludes the safest way is to judge by what they *do*, and not by what they *profess*; and so far indeed he is in the right. For to be sure mens *Actions* are a much more *certain* Index of their *Thoughts* than their *Words*; and therefore when he sees those who *profess* Religion *act* as if they did not *believe* it, and observes how their *Words* do run atilt at their *Practice*, and how *broadly* their Lives *give the Lye* to their Professions, he presently concludes that whatever they *pretend* they are *Infidels* in their Hearts; and being once perswaded that those whom he thinks do best *understand* Religion no not *believe* it, he thence immediately concludes that they find no *reason* to believe it, and do only put on the *Profession* of it as an *Angelical Vizor*, being minded to play the *Devils*

Devils in it with more *Credit* and *Security*. And by this Popular way of reasoning they conclude Religion to be nothing but a politick *Device* and *Engine* which wise men have contrived to *beguile* and *manage* the simple; and that whatsoever is *pretended* for it, it is a mere *juggling-box* which *Knaves* play tricks with to *delude* and *cozen* Fools. And of this way of Mens reasoning themselves into Atheism, the Age we live in is full of woful Instances; for now a-days to *scorn* and *despise* Religion is no longer the Prerogative of *Wits* and *Vertuosoes*, but the Infection is spread and propagated into *Shops* and *Stalls*, and the *Rabble* are become *Professors* of Atheism. Now whence should this proceed? alas, it is not to be supposed that such persons as these should ever be able to *Philosophize* themselves into Infidelity, and turn Atheists either upon *Aristotle's* or *Epicurus's* Hypotheses; no, no, their Argument lies *nearer home*, and more open to their Capacities: they have seen a world of *vile tricks* played in our Religious *Carnivals* and *Masquerades*; some making their Religion a *Sanctuary* for their *Treasons* and *Rebellions*; others *gilding* over their *Faction* and *Sedition* with a specious pretence of *zeal* for God's glory: some prosecuting their own *Revenge* and *Ambition* under the Ensigns of *pure Worship* and *true Protestant Religion*; others *commuting* for their Excesses of *Riot* with a clamorous zeal for *Decency* and *Order*, and others *picking Pockets* with one Hand while they have been *lifting up* the other to Heaven in *Devotion*; the sight of which hath tempted the *rude* and *unthinking* Vulgar to look upon Religion as a mere *Castle in the Air*, that hath no

Foundation but in the *Invention* of Knaves and in the *Faith* of Fools.

Now tho there is no doubt to be made but that these vile *Hypocrites* who have laid this *Stumbling-block* in Mens way, shall one day *dearly* answer for the *ruin* of those whom it hath occasioned to *fall*, and for thus *exposing* the Credit and Reputation of Religion to the *misprisions* of those that do not *understand* it; yet it is a most inexcusable piece of *folly* for Men thus to *infer Atheistical* Conclusions from the ill Example of *Hypocritical professors*. For in the first place, to conclude a Man an *Infidel* because his Actions *run counter* to the Faith he pretends to, is very *rash* and *fallacious*. For do we not see Men very often act *against* their Consciences, and fly in the face of their *own* Convictions? why may we not then as fairly suppose those wicked actions we argue from to be the effects of an *obstinate* Will as of an *Infidel* Judgment; but suppose it were true that those Men were all *Infidels* that do thus act against their *Faith*, doth it therefore follow that *you* must turn Infidel too? if it be so *unsafe* and so *unworthy* of a Man to carry his Brains in other Mens *Heads*, what a shame is it to carry them in other Mens *Heels*, and to suffer his Faith to be led by the *Tract* of their Examples through all the wild *Mazes* of Irreligion and Atheism?

But you will say, by these Mens Examples you plainly see what a Mystery of Iniquity there is in *religious Pretences*; and what then? must Religion be a *Cheat* because bad Men *play tricks* with it, and make it a *Cloak* for their Knavery? if so, then the best things in the World are liable to *Suspicion*;

cion ; because there is nothing so good but what is capable of being prostituted to very ill purposes : I confess when we see so many *Cheats* acted under the *Masque* of Religion, we have just reason to call it to a more *severe* Examination, and to inquire more *narrowly* into the Proofs and Evidences upon which it is founded ; but presently to *reject* Religion because *Knaves* and *Hypocrites* make bold to disguise themselves in it, is every whit as *absurd* and *ridiculous* as if men should deny that there is any such Vertue as *Chastity* in the World, because there are common *Prostitutes* that pretend to it.

VIII. Another cause of Atheism is *Divisions* and *Schisms* formed out of little Opinions in Religion. For it is natural to men to place a great part of their Religion in those Opinions, for whose sake they *divide* and *separate* from each other ; so that if *hereafter* they happen to be dissatisfied with those Opinions of which they are excessively fond at *the present*, they will be under a great Temptation to suspect Religion *it self*, as if that were as ill grounded as those *little Opinions* which they laid so great a *stress* on, and so after they have run through several *Setts* of Opinions, and in fine have discovered them to be *all* Delusions, they are ready to conclude Religion *it self* to be nothing but a System of *Lyes* and *Impostures*. For as weak Heads when they perceive the *Battlements* shake, are apt to suspect the *Foundations* ; so weak Understandings will be prone to suspect even the *Fundamentals* of Religion, when once they perceive those darling Notions *totter* which they have confidently presumed to *superstruct* thereupon. And

And upon this account I make no doubt but that the Irreligion of this Age is very much to be attributed to the *Sects* and *Divisions* of it. For how many woful Examples have we of Persons who had once a great *Zeal* and *Satisfaction* in Religion, that upon their *causeless* Separation from the Churches Communion, have run from *Sect to Sect*, and from *one* extravagant Opinion to *another*, till at last being convinced of the *Cheats* and *Impostures* of them all, they have totally discarded Religion *it self*, and made their last Resort into *Atheism*. And as separating into Parties upon *little* Differences in Religion exposes the Separatists *themselves* to great Temptations to *Atheism*, so it doth those also who are *Indifferent* on both sides, and stand ingaged on *neither* part of the Separation. For whilst these men behold the State of Religion thus miserably *broken* and *divided* and the Professors of it *crumbled* into so many *Sects* and *Parties*, and each Party spitting *Fire* and *Damnation* at its Adversary, so that if *all* say true, or indeed any *two* of them in *five hundred* Sects which there are in the World, (and for all I know there may be *five thousand*) it is *five hundred* to one but that every one is *damn'd*, because every one damns *all* but it self, and *it self* is *damn'd* by *four hundred and ninety nine*; so that 'tis a mighty Chance if in so great a Volly of *Anathemae*s which every one hath levelled at it, any one escape: When, I say, uningaged Persons that are not able to distinguish between the *disputable* Opinions that constitute these Sects, and the *Necessaries* and *Essentials* of Religion, shall reflect upon this tumult and confusion of Faiths, they will

will be apt to conclude, without further enquiry, that Religion it self is nothing but an infinite Maze of *disputable Opinions*, wherein Men wander about in the dark, and *justle* and *rancounter* one another without any certain Clew on either side to *guide* and *direct* their Enquiries ; under which misapprehension they will either damn *all* Religion for a *Cheat*, or *hover* about in eternal *uncertainty*, not knowing where, in so great a Confusion of Religions, to *fix* and *settle* their Faith. And hereunto, I doubt not, is to be attributed a great part of the *Irreligion* of this Age. For while some Men, by running themselves out of breath in pursuit of those *Ignes fatui*, or *New-lights*, that have broken and divided our Communion, have at length quite tired out their Zeal, and religious Pretences, and so are at length lain down in the Mire of *Irreligion* and open *Profaneness* ; others, by looking on and beholding the wild *Divisions* which these new Lights have made, have been tempted to *run away* from Religion it self, as if that were only a *Labyrinth* of uncertain Opinions, contrived on purpose to *distract* and *bewilder* Mens Brains.

Now tho' the Authors of these *Divisions*, whosoever they are, are doubtless highly accountable to God for all that Irreligion which attends them, yet for Men from hence to draw Atheistical Conclusions, is much more imputable to the *perverse-ness* of their *Wills*, than to the *weakness* of their *Understandings*.

• For in the first place, What if you have discovered some Opinions in Religion to be *false* and *erroneous*, of the Truth of which you were once very *confident* ; doth it therefore follow, that

there is *nothing* certain in *Religion*? If so, you may as well conclude that there is nothing certain in the *Mathematicks* neither, since some men have been as confident of the Truth of false *Axioms* in *Geometry*, as ever you could be of false *Propositions* in *Religion*. That you were once *over-confident* in a disputable Matter was your own *Fault* and *Folly*, but must it therefore follow that *Religion* is a *Cheat*, because you have been rash and inconsiderate? and what though you once laid the great *stress* of your *Religion* upon an Opinion which you now discern is erroneous, must *Religion* needs suffer for your mistake, and be branded for an *Impostor*, because you took that for *Religion* which was not? For there are a thousand *Propositions* about *Religion*, which have been zealously disputed for and against, which have torn men into *Sects*, and been the *Religion* of the separate *Communities* they have formed and denominated, that yet are very remote *Superstructures* on the true *Foundations* of *Religion*, and may be true or false, believed or disbelieved without any damage to *Religion*. And therefore before you suspect the *Truth* of *Religion* it self, upon your discovering the *Falseness* of any particular *Opinion*, you ought in all reason to consider whether that *Opinion* be so *essential* to *Religion* as that it cannot *subsist* without it; for if it be not, 'tis the most unreasonable thing in the *World*, to infer a suspicion of the *Truth* of *Religion* from the *Falseness* of *Propositions* that have little or no *Dependance* on it, and to reject the *Gold* and the *precious Stones* for the sake of the *Wood*, and *Hay*, and *Stubble* that have been superstructed upon them. And then,

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2. What can be more absurd than for men to reject Religion, because mens *Opinions* about it have been so *divided*? For if you survey the several *Divisions* of *Christians*, you will find they generally *concurr* in all the *necessary* and *essential* Doctrines of Religion, and that the *Opinions* wherein they *divide*, are, for the most part, such *unnecessary* Speculations, as that it is almost *indifferent* to Religion whether they be *true* or *false*; And with what reason can we suspect the Truth of *necessary* Doctrines wherein *all* are agreed, because there are Disagreements in unnecessary ones? Because there are some Propositions in the *Mathematicks*, about which the *Opinions* of the Mathematicians are *divided*, shall we therefore suspect the Truth of all those wherein they are *agreed*? For if their *disagreement* be an Argument of the *Falshood* of the *former*, why should not their *Agreement* be as good an Argument of the *Truth* of the *latter*? But how much soever mens *Opinions* about Religion may be *divided*, all that can be thence inferred, is, that some men are *mistaken*; and while some men judge of Religion by their *Passions* and *Interests*, and others by the *Prejudices* of their *Education*, it is impossible it should be otherwise. But for men in the midst of such apparent causes of Difference, to resolve to be of *no* Religion till all are agreed in *one*, is just as wise and as rational as if they should determine not to go to Dinner till all the Clocks in the Town strike Eleven together.

IX. And lastly, Another great cause of Atheism is the *prophane* and *careless* neglect of God's *Publick Worship*. For men of *Secular* lives, whose

minds are always engaged in this eternal hurry of *worldly* Affairs, are too prone to forget God, and all their Concerns in *Religion*, and *another World*; and even their conversing so much with these *sensitive* things which are always before them, and are continually *crowding* in upon their Thoughts, doth naturally *indispose* them to exercise their Faculties about *divine* and *spiritual* Objects, and render their minds *ομιδω βαρεις*, unfit and unable to ascend to the Contemplation of God. And therefore God hath appointed the *stated* Times of Publick Worship, on purpose to withdraw men from their *secular* pursuits, that so they be at leisure to *retire* into themselves, to *recollect* their scatter'd Thoughts, and *awake* their Minds to a sense of Piety and Religion; which can by no way so effectually be perform'd as by the Solemnities of *Publick Worship*, wherein our Remembrance of God is not only *refreshed*, and our Piety to him *excited* and *directed* by the Publick Instructions, but our natural Sense of Religion is also *actuated* and *intended* by the mutual *Concurrence* and *Example* of each other's Devotion. Thus after our Religion hath been *slackned* by our worldly Cares and Delights, it is daily *wound up* again by the Returns of our Publick Worship, and so the sense of God is still *kept alive* in our minds. When Men therefore turn their backs upon the *Publick Worship*, and devote the *holy Seasons* of it to their secular Business or Pleasures, it is not to be wonder'd at that their sense of a Divine Power, which they seldom or never *think of*, should by degrees *decay* and *wear off*; and that *that* being extinguished, they should sink into *Irreligion* and *Atheism*.

For

For when once Men have worn out their *Sence* of a Deity, and, as the Consequence of that, are broke loose from all the *Ties* and *Obligations* of Conscience, they can have no other Principle but Atheism to *warrant* their Actions; and when once they have abandoned all *Sense* and *Remembrance* of God, so that he is not in all their Thoughts, they are in a fair forwardness to *Infidelity*. For though as yet they do not actually *disbelieve* his Existence, so neither do they actually *believe* it; for how should they actually believe *that* which they have no *Sense* or *Thought* of; so that in this insensible State their Faith is concerned neither *one* way nor *other*, nor are they at all solicitous whether there *be* a God or *no*. Thus from their *prophane neglect* of God's Worship, Men naturally slide into an habitual *Senselessness* and *Incogitancy* of him, and from thence to *not believing*; and from thence to *disbelieving* him is an *easy* and almost *necessary* Transition.

Of the Truth of which, the Age we live in will furnish us with too many *sorrowful* Instances. For as this Nation, which hath been always remarked for a *grave, serious* and *religious* Genius, was never so generally *tainted* with Atheism as now; so neither was it ever chargeable with such a general Neglect of the Publick Worship of God, which for several Ages after the Reformation was duly *frequented*, and devoutly *celebrated*, till by the Prevalence of our *restless* Sects and Factions, the Discipline of the Church was gradually *weakened*, and at last totally *destroyed*; in the happy Days before which the Families of each Parish went *hand in hand* together to the House of God, and

with *one* Heart and Voice celebrated his Praise and Worship; and to absent *one's* self *ordinarily* from the Publick Assemblies, was hardly consistent with the *Reputation* of being a Christian. By which means their natural *Sense* and *Dread* of the Divine Power, being continually *awakened* and *revived*, they were not only *secured* by it from all Atheistical Impressions, but also *animated* and *excited* to a pious and sober Conversation. But the spirit of Schism prevailing against the Power and Discipline of the Church, till it had utterly *disabled* it from restraining the Wantonness of that *crooked* and *perverse* Generation; some incorporated themselves into *separate Communion*s, and others, under pretence of so doing, withdrew from the *Publick Assemblies* to the common Resorts of *Idleness*, *Drunkennes*s and *Debauchery*; and whilst the *Masters* took the Liberty of *Conscience* to go to *Conventicles*, the *Servants*, pretending to be of a different Persuasion, assumed the Liberty of *Will* to go to *Taverns* and *Ale-houses*; insomuch that it grew a common Observation, that there have been more young People debauched on the *Lord's-Day*, than all the *Week* after, whilst under pretence of *joyning* with a different Communion, they have taken occasion to *withdraw* themselves from the inspection of their Parents and Masters. And till once our Schisms and Divisions are *cured*, it will be impossible to *prevent* this ill Practice, unless we will be so unjust as to deny that Liberty of Conscience to our Servants which with so much *Clamour* and *Confidence* we demand of our Governors. And thus, by degrees, *Prophaneness* hath insinuated it self under the Covert of *Schism*, and

Liberty

Liberty of Conscience became a common Sanctuary for the licentious neglect and contempt of God's Worship, till at last it grew so common and fashionable, that it almost ceas'd to be scandalous. Yea, so far at length hath this impious Humour prevail'd, that to go to Church, and be devout, is among too many men grown a Note of Disgrace, and the Character of a Priest-ridden Fool; and a Man is hardly look'd upon as fit for genteel Conversation, that knows any other use of a Holy-day, but only to be at leisure to lie a bed, or to Game or Drink and Debauch; by which Neglect and Contempt of the Worship of God, that natural Sense of him, which should have been quickened and cherished by it, hath been gradually worn out of Mens minds; the Consequence of which, is, all that Atheism and Infidelity that over-spreads this present Age. For when once Men have renounced the Worship of God, and in consequence are abandoned of their natural Sense of his Majesty, they are upon the brink of Atheism; into which their own vile Lusts, whose Interest it is that there should be no God, will easily precipitate them. But alas, how ridiculous as well as impious is it for men to take occasion from their own Neglect of God's Worship, to renounce the Belief of his Being; what is this but to tail one folly to another, and to second Extravagance with Madness? It would make one amazed to think that ever reasonable Beings should be so besotted, and to live in a World over which an Almighty Being presides, who sees all their Actions, and in whose Hands all Events are which concern them, and even the everlasting Fate of their Souls; and yet take no more notice

of him, pay no more *Respect* or *Veneration* to him, than if he were the meereft *trifle*, or most insignificant *Cypher* in the whole Creation. But sure, when Men have been guilty of such a *black* and *horrid* Impiety, one would think their wisest Course for the time to come should be to *repent* of it, and to endeavour to *compensate* for their past Prophaneness by the Strictness and Sincerity of their future Devotion; but for Men to proceed from *neglecting* God's Worship to *denying* his Being, is to do *worse* because they have done *ill*, and thereby to *inflame* the Provocation, as if they were resolved to render their Condition *desperate*, because they have been so *fool-hardy* as to render it *dangerous*.

And thus I have given a short Account of the common *Causes* of Atheism, which, you see, are all derived from Mens *Wills*, and not from their *Reason*. For this I do most firmly believe, that the Arguments of God's Existence are so *plain* and *convincing*, that no Man ever *was* or *can be* an Atheist without some inexcusable fault in his *Will*.

S E C T. II.

Of the inexcusable Folly and Unreasonableness of Atheism.

THE next thing I proposed, was to endeavour to *confirm* and *establish* this great Principle of Religion, *viz.* the *Belief* of a *God*, by representing

senting the great *folly* and *unreasonableness* of Atheism. In discoursing which, I shall meddle no more than needs must with the *Proofs* and *Arguments* of a Deity; because, as I have shewed before, 'tis not for want of *Arguments* that Men turn Atheists, but for want of *Consideration*, and an *honest Will*; and that the *Byass* that carries them towards Infidelity, is not in their *Understandings*, but in their *Wills* and *Affections*; that 'tis only their *Partiality* to their *Lusts*, that enclines them to Atheism; and that the Reason why they are so ready to *believe* that there *is* no God, is, because they *wish* in their Hearts that there *were* none. To establish the Belief of a God, therefore, I shall endeavour to represent the *folly* and *unreasonableness* of Mens being partial on the side of Atheism, supposing it were *disputable* whether there *be* a God or *no*; and this will evidently appear in the following Particulars.

I. The Atheist concludes against the *Dignity* of *Humane Nature*, and renders it not only *mean* but *ridiculous*.

II. He concludes against the very *Being* and *Well-being* of *Humane Society*.

III. He concludes against that which is the main *Support* and *Comfort* of *Humane Life*.

IV. He concludes for *that* side of the Question which is infinitely the most *unsafe* and *hazardous*.

V. He concludes for the *unsafest* side of the Question upon the *highest uncertainties*.

VI. He plainly *contradicts himself* in his *Conclusion*.

I. The

I. The Atheist concludes against the *Dignity of Humane Nature*, and thereby renders it not only *mean* but *ridiculous*. For the chief *Worth* and *Dignity* of Humane Nature consists in its Relation to *God*, without whom its *noblest* and most *excellent* Faculties are in a great measure *useless* and *insignificant*; for if there be *no* God, the objects of our Five Senses are the *sole* *Entertainment* of our Understanding and Will, and we have no *other* use of these mighty Faculties, (which if there were any such thing as an infinite *Truth* and *Goodness* are naturally capable of enjoying them) but only to *consult* and *chuse* the Gratifications of our *Sense*, and the Pleasures of this perishing *Body*. For, excepting God, there is no such thing in Nature as a *spiritual enjoyment*, no *Good* to be found, but what is prepared to entertain the boundless *Liquorishness* of our carnal Appetites; and had we none but such as *these* to consult for, our *Reason*, which is the *Crown* and *Glory* of our Natures, would have nothing else to do but to *Cater* for our *Flesh*, and we should have an Understanding and Will to no other purpose, but to enable us to play the *Brutes* with more *Skill* and *Sagacity*. And indeed, setting *God* aside, we are so far from having the advantage of *Brutes* by being *rational*, that we are rather so much the more *wretched* and *despicable* than *they*. For as for the Happiness of *this* Life, which wholly consists of *Sensual Good*, the Senses and Appetites we have in common with the *Beasts* that perish, are sufficient for the enjoyment of it; and with these we might relish it as well *without* our Reason as *with* it; we might *Eat* and *Drink*, and *Sleep*, and enjoy all the Pleasures of

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of a Brute with as much *Gust* and *Savour* as we do now with our *Reason*. For if we were Brutes we should do as Brutes do; we should weary our selves no longer with *vain* pursuits, nor vex our selves with *fruitless* Expectations, nor torment our selves with the *fears* of a Disappointment, but e'en take our Pleasures when our Appetites *craved* 'em, and they freely *offered* themselves to our Enjoyment. And tho' our *Reason* doth sometimes *cook* the Enjoyments of our Sense, and give them a higher *Relish* and *Luxury*, yet this Advantage is very much outweigh'd by the many *Regrets*, and *Remorses*, and *stinging Reflections* it intermingles with our Pleasures; So that had we only the Faculties of *Brutes*, I am verily persuaded we should more *sincerely* enjoy the Happiness of the *brutal* Nature, but to be sure we should bear our Miseries with much more *Ease* and *Chearfulness*. For supposing there *is* no God, our Reason can afford us no solid support under any Calamity; the main Arguments of Comfort, as I shall shew by and by, being derived from the Consideration of *God* and his *Providence*; which being taken away, I doubt not but we should bear our Miseries *without* our Reason, much better than *with* it. For then we should neither be *terrified* at the *approach* of them, nor *tormented* with *Despair* under them; then we should neither *multiply* them with *false* Opinions, nor *enrage* them with *bitter* Reflections on the Causes of them; but whenever they happened, bear them as Beasts do, without any other Pain or Uneasiness than what they necessarily *impressed* on our *Senses*, which would render them a thousand times more tolerable to

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us, than all our *Arguments* can do, supposing we have no *God* nor *Providence* to argue from.

So that were that *true* which the Atheist concludes for, *viz.* That there is *no God* ; it would follow, that *Reason* in a Man serves to no other purpose but to render him more *wretched* and *despicable*. If there be a *God* indeed, our rational *Faculties* are of *excellent Use* ; as having an *Object commensurate* to their widest *Capacities*, and every way *fit* and *worthy* to employ and exercise them ; an infinite *Truth* for our *Understanding* to dive into, and an infinite *Good* for our *Wills* and *Affections* to pursue and embrace. But if there be nothing to be enjoyed by us but what is *Carnal* and *Sensual*, our *Reason* is so far from being our *Ornament* and *Perfection*, that it is the *Plague* and *Disgrace* of our *Natures*.

For for any *Nature* to have more *Faculties* than what are necessary to its *Happiness*, is *monstrous* ; and therefore had we nothing to enjoy but the *Happiness* of *Brutes*, 'twould be a *Deformity* to our *Natures* to have the *Faculties* of *Angels* ; because these *Faculties* would be in *vain*, there being no *adequate Object* in the *Nature* of *Things* to employ and entertain them. So that were the *Doctrine* of the Atheist *true*, it would cashier our *Reason* for a *vain* and *useless Faculty* ; a thing that serves our *Nature* to little other purpose, but only to vex and disquiet it. And what *Man* that hath any *Regard* or *Reverence* for himself, would ever be fond of a *Belief* that thus sinks and depretiates him, and lays the *Glory* of his *Nature* in the *Dust* ? For if it be true that there is no *God*, it is as true that *Man* is a most *despicable Creature*,
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that his *Reason*, upon which he so much values himself, is a *frivolous* and *impertinent* Faculty; a Faculty that can serve him to no higher purpose than only to be a *Cook* and a *Taylor* to his Body, to study *Sauces* and *Fashions* for it; and that while it *serves* him in *this*, *disserves* him in a thousand other Instances, in mingling his Pleasures with *Gall* and *Wormwood*, with *Fears* and *Impatiences*, *Anxieties* and *Remorses*, and in *aggravating* and *putting Stings* into his Griefs and Calamities. So that when all is done, the only thing that makes it *worth the while* for a Man to be *reasonable*, is, that there is a Being of infinite Perfection to be *known*, and *loved*, and *imitated* and *adored* by him; and to *deny* the Existence of this blessed Being, is infinitely to *undervalue* our selves, and to *eclipse* the Glory and Dignity of our Natures. So that by being partial to *Atheism*, we are partial to our own *Shame* and *Disgrace*, and industriously consult the *Reproach* and *Infamy* of Humane Nature; for the Devil himself cannot affix a blacker *Scandal* on our Reason, than what is implied in this Assertion, That there is no God.

And as it lays the greatest *Reproach* upon our Nature, so it also renders us the most *Ridiculous* of all Beings. For there are certain affections interwoven with Humane Nature, which, if there be no God, are shamefully *ridiculous*; such as the *Dread of Invisible Powers*, the *Sense of Good and Evil*, and the anxious Expectation of a *Judgment to come*; all which are so deeply *inlaid* in our Beings, as that with all our Arts and Reasoning we cannot totally *erase* them. And even the Atheists themselves, who have tried all possible ways of
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extinguishing them, have found by experience that the utmost they can do, is, to damp and stupify them at present; but that in despite of them they will revive and awake again when Death or Danger approaches them. Now how ridiculous are these Affections in Humane Natures, if there be no such Being as a God? For upon this Supposal we have Passions that have no Objects in the Nature of Things, that have nothing in the World to move and affect them, but wild Chimera's, flying Dragons, and Castles in the Air; and whereas all other Beings have real Objects in Nature corresponding to their several Instincts and Affections (for so the Hare hath a natural dread of a Dog, the Sheep of a Wolf, the Mice of a Cat, the Toad of a Spider, all the Objects of which Dread have a real Existence.) Poor silly Man, supposing there is no God; naturally trembles at an invisible Nothing, and is horribly afraid of the Shadow of an Imagination. So that if the Atheists Opinion were true, the Ape that looks pale at the sight of a Snail, and flies as if he feared lest that slow Creature should overtake and devour him, would be a great deal less ridiculous than timorous Man, whose Nature is thus hagg'd with frightful Imaginations of invisible Powers, and a Judgment to come.

And what Man that hath any Reverence for the Humane Nature within him, would ever suffer himself to be bribed for an Opinion that doth not only undervalue but deride and ridicule it. Should you hear your self branded with a contemptible Character, or ranked among Apes or any such ridiculous Animals, you would doubtless be so far from courting the Author of it, that you would re-
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sent it as a great Affront, and think your selves obliged in honour to *return* the Provocation; and yet for the sake of a few base *Lusts*, which are the *Shame* and *Scandal* of your Natures, you espouse the Cause of Atheism, though it *derides* and *affronts* you to your Face, and *stains* the Glory of your Natures with the most *contemptible* and *ridiculous* Character in the World.

II. The Atheist concludes against the very *Being* and *Well-being* of *Humane Society*. For the Soul that *penetrates* through all *Humane Society*, and *compacts* and *unites* it in a regular Body, is Religion, or the *Sense* and *Acknowledgment* of a Divine Power, without which all the Parts of the Corporation of Mankind, like the Members of a *dead Body*, must necessarily *disband* and *fly abroad* into Atoms. For a *form'd Society*, which is an *united Multitude*, consists in the *Harmony* and *Consent* of its Members mutually *united* by Laws and Agreements, and *disposed* into a *Regular Subordination* to one another, neither of which can any *Humane Society* long continue without the *Belief* and *Acknowledgment* of a God.

For without this, in the first place, 'tis impossible that the Parts of any Society should continue *united* by Laws and Agreement. For 'tis from the Belief of a God, that all the *Obligations* of Conscience are *derived*; so that take *that* away, and *these* must dissolve; and when the Obligations of Conscience are *dissolved*, there is nothing but *Mens temporal Interests* can oblige them to *conform* to those Laws and mutual Agreements by which they are united to one another. And if it be their *Interest* only that obliges them to be *just*
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and *faithful* to their mutual Agreements, they will be equally obliged to be *unjust* and *unfaithful*, whenever it is their *Interest* to be so. So that this Principle which only obliges them to be *honest* while it is for their *Advantage*, will as effectually oblige them to be *Knaves* whenever the Case is *altered*; and things being reduced to this Issue, there remains no Foundation of *Trust* and mutual *Confidence* among Men. For what can any Man's *Promise* signifie, if he be under no Obligation but *Interest*? To be sure, if it be *for* his Interest, he will *do* what he *says* without any *Promise*; but if it be *not*, what *Promise* can oblige him? You will say, it is his Interest to keep his *Word*, because otherwise he will forfeit his *Reputation* for the future? But pray what *Reputation* can a Man have to *forfeit*, that owns no other *Law* or *Obligation* but his Interest? or who will ever presume upon that Man's *Word* and *Engagement*, whose avowed Principle it is to be honest no longer than he can gain by it? Thus Atheism, you see, resolves all our *Obligations* into our worldly *Interest*, which is so *fickle* and *mutable* a Principle, so dependent upon *Chance*, and the *Inconstancies* of Fortune, and there is no hold to be taken of those that are governed by it. For that which is their Interest to *Day* may be their Disadvantage to *Morrow*; and if it should *so* happen, they must steer a *contrary* Course, or else act *contrary* to their leading Principle. So that for Men to trust each other upon this *fickle* Principle, is all one as to rely upon the Constancy of a *Weather-cock*, which every contrary Wind turns to a contrary Position. And things being once reduced to *this* Issue, that Men
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can place no *Trust* or *Confidence* in one another, their Society will soon become their greatest *Plague* and *Vexation*. For every *Man* will be forced to stand upon his Guard against every *Man*, and keep himself reserved and retired within himself; till at last, out of mutual *Distrust* and *Jealousie* of one another, they are forced to withdraw their Society, and to live apart in separate Dens, for fear of being intrapt and devoured by each other.

And as *Atheism* cuts in sunder those *Ligaments* of mutual *Trust* and *Agreement* by which the Parts of Humane Society are united: so it also dissolves that Regular Subordination that is between them. *Plutarch* observes, in his Treatise against *Colot*. Πόλις ἂν μοι δοκεῖ μάλλον ἐδάφους χωρεῖ, ἢ πολιτεία τ' οὐκ ἐκ θεῶν δόξης ἀναυρεθείσης παντάπασιν, σύστασιν λαβεῖν, ἢ λαβῆσα τηρῆσαι: i. e. It seems to be more possible for a City to stand without Ground, than for a Commonwealth to subsist and continue without the Belief of a God; which is indeed the only firm Foundation whereupon all Government and Society depends. For if there be no God, what should oblige any to own any Superiour, or pay any Submission? And if his Interest be his only Obligation to his Superiours, whenever he can mend his Fortune by *Rebelling* against them, that very same Interest which at present restrains him from it, will with equal force invite him to it; nor will it signify any thing that we are obliged to the contrary by *Oaths* of Fidelity and Allegiance: For if it be our Interest to be faithful to the Government, our own Prudence and Discretion will oblige us to it without such Oaths as well as with them; but if it be not our In-

terest, and this be the only Principle that obliges us, no *Oath* or *Engagement* can hold us. So that in this State of Things, all the Security that Governours can have of their Subjects, is, that they *will not* rebel when they are *not able*; but as soon as they think it *safe*, to be sure they will think it *lawful*; which being once admitted, will *undermine* the very Foundation of Government, and utterly dissolve that regular *Subordination* by which Humane Society is supported. Whereas admitting that the Laws of our *Prince* are bound upon us by the Authority of a Sovereign Lord, who can render us eternally *happy* or *miserable*, we are obliged to *obey* him by all that we can *hope* or *fear*, and have all the Engagements to *Loyalty* that the Reflections on a *happy* or *miserable* Eternity can lay upon us. What a prodigious piece of *Folly* is it therefore for Men to embrace *Atheism* as their *Interest*, which doth thus directly tend to *deprive* us of all the *Comforts* of Society, by *involving* us in eternal *Confusions* and *Disorders*? For if once we take away *mutual Trust*, and *Government* from the *World*, both which have a necessary *Dependence* on the Belief of a God, we break all the *Harmony* of *Humane Society*, and convert it into a *Commonwealth* of *Canibals*. And what Man in his Wits could ever be fond of an Opinion that proclaims *open War* with Mankind, and is pregnant with *Consequents* so *fatal* and *destructive* to the *World*? Can we think it more *advantageous* to us that *Atheism* should be *true*, than that *Humane Society* should be *upheld* and *perpetuated*? or are the *Pleasures* we reap from the *Lusts* which encline us to *Atheism*, comparably so valuable as the

Benefits

Benefits which accrue to us from being *formed and united* into regular Corporations? If not, how apparently do we engage against our own *Interest*, when we espouse the *Cause of Irreligion*.

III. The Atheist concludes against that which is the main *Support and Comfort of Humane Life*. For while we are in this World, our *best and securest Condition* is exposed to a world of *sad and uncomfortable Accidents*, which we have neither the *Wisdom to foresee*, nor the *Power to prevent*; So far are we from being *self-sufficient* as to our worldly *Happiness*, that there are a *thousand Causes* upon which we depend for it, that are not in our *Power* to dispose of; and in such a State of *uncertainty*, wherein we are continually *banded to and fro*, and made the *Game of inconstant Fortune*, what *Quiet or Security* can we enjoy within our selves without believing that there is a *God at the Helm*, that *steddily over-rules* all Events that concern us, and *steers and directs* them by the *invariable Compass* of his own infinite *Wisdom and Goodness*. For considering how *poor and indigent* our Nature is, how we are fain to *seek abroad* and to go a *begging from Door to Door* for our *Happiness*; how we depend upon *Chance*, and are *secure* of nothing we *possess, or desire, or hope for*; how prone we are to be *alarmed* with the *Prospect of a sad Futurity*, and to *magnify distant Evils* in our own *Apprehensions*; how apt we are to *aggravate* our *Miseries* by our *Impatience and Despair*, and to *pill* our *Enjoyments* by expecting more from them than their *Natures* will afford; considering these things, I say, which way can we turn our selves without a *God?* or

where can we *repose* our restless Thoughts but in his *Providence*? Verily, could I be *tempted* to believe that there is *no* God, I should look upon *Humane Nature* in its present Circumstances as the most *forlorn* and *abandoned* part of the Creation, and wish that I had had the Luck to be of any *other* Species than that of *Rational Animal*. For in the State I am, I find my self liable to a thousand Dangers *against* which I have no *Sanctuary*, and *under* which I have no *Support*, if there be *no* God to govern the World; and having such a dismal Prospect of things *before* me, and a busie Mind *within* me that will be continually *working on* and *aggravating* the Evils of it, what can I do with my self, or how can I enjoy my self without a *God* to *rely on*? Upon the supposal that he *is*, and that he *governs* the World, I can easily *relieve* my self under the most *dismal* Apprehensions; I can *fairly* conclude and *safely* depend on it, that if I take care, by my Submission to God's Will, to make him my *Friend*, he will either *prevent* the Evils I apprehend, or *support* me under them, or *convert* them to my *good*, either of which is sufficient to set my *Heart at ease*, and instate me in a *quiet* Enjoyment of my self. But now by *giving up* the Belief of a *God*, I *throw away* all these Consideration, and leave my self utterly *destitute* and *supportless*. For what solid ground of *Support* can I have, when I have no manner of *Security* either that the Evils I *dread* shall be *prevented*, or that I shall have a *Proportionable Strength* to bear them, or that I shall ever reap any *good* or *advantage* from them; without *which* Considerations, every Evil that *threatens* or *befals* me

is pure unmingled Misery, against which there is no Fence or Cordial in Reason or Philosophy. For suppose I should agree with the ancient Moralists, that every ill Accident that befalls me is *fatal*, as being the Effect of some *necessary Cause* that is without my *Power* or *Disposal*, and therefore 'tis unreasonable for me to *grieve* at it; this will be so far from any way *mollifying* the Anguish of my Mind, that 'twill rather *inrage* and *inflame* it. For that my Calamity is *fatal*, so that it is not in my Power to *avoid* or *remove* it, is rather an *Aggravation* than a *Diminution* of it. Or suppose I should reason as the same Moralists otherwhiles do, Why should I *grieve* at the Evils that befall me, when alas! my *Grief* will be so far from *lessening* them, that 'twill rather *encrease* and *multiply* them, contribute new *Venome* to their *Stings*, and render them more *pungent* and *dolorous*; What a *faint Cordial* would it be to my *oppressed Mind*, to consider that my *Grief* will but *augment* my *Load*? It is some *Ease* to a dejected Soul to *vent* its Grievs in *Moans* and *Lamentations*, which while she seeks to *smother* in a *sullen silence*, like imprisoned Wind, will breed a *Colick* in her Bowels; and is it not a sad thing that I must deny my self the *only Solace* of a *miserable Man*, for fear of *augmenting* my Misery? Again, Suppose I should reason thus with the same Authors, That Afflictions are *indifferent* things, and in themselves neither *good* nor *evil*, but indifferently *improveable* into *Mischiefs* or *Benefits*; this, I confess, were a *good Argument*, supposing that the Affliction came from a *Good God*, who can *extract Good* out of all Evils, and render the *rankest Poison*

Medicinal: but otherwise you will find 'tis but a cold Comfort to call your *Misery* by another name: For if there be no God to temper our Evils, and to ordain and direct them to wise and good Ends, we shall find in the issue they will prove themselves Evils to us by what soft Name soever we may call them. Again, and to name no more, Suppose I should reason thus, as these Masters of Morality do, That to bear Afflictions with an unconcerned Mind, is brave, and manly, and generous; That it is an Argument of a great and heroick Mind, that hath raised it self above the reach of Misfortunes: I readily confess so it is, supposing a Man hath good reason thus to bear his Afflictions, which is the Question in debate; for then it is the Triumph of Reason over Passion, and an illustrious Instance of a well-fortified Mind; but if we have no reason for it, all these glorious Words, Generous, Brave, &c. are nothing but empty Flash, and meer Rhodomontado. For for a Man to be unconcerned with Evils without reason, is so far from being generous and brave, that 'tis an Argument of his brutal Stupidity and Fool-hardiness. But yet supposing that there is no God, these are the main Arguments we have to support our selves under any Calamity. But alas, such real Grievs of ours are not to be redress'd with petty Sayings, and grave Sentences, which though they may look takingly at a Distance, will, when we come to apply and experience them, force us to pronounce as Job did of his Friend, miserable Comforters are ye all, and Physicians of no value. So that were we left destitute of God and a Providence, and of all those blessed Supports we derive from thence, we were
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of all Creatures the *most* miserable. For in this state of Things we are compassed about with *Miseries* and *Misfortunes*, and which, without God, is our *greatest* Misfortune, we have a thing called *Reason* within our Breast, which is very *ingenious* in giving *Stings* to our *Miseries*, and *vexing* us with *cutting* Reflections of them, but it is not able to *qualifie* one Grief, or minister one dram of *solid Comfort* to us.

But when we lift up our Eyes to *God*, there are such *vast* and *innumerable* Comforts flowing down to us from the Consideration of his *Nature* and *Providence*, as are sufficient not only to *allay* our *Sorrow*, but to *convert* them into *Joys* and *Triumphs*. For in him we behold not only an infinite *Wisdom* that always *knows* what is best for us, but also an infinite *Goodness* that always *wills* what it knows to be so, and an infinite *Power* that always *does* what it *wills*; and whilst we *see* and *consider* this, there is nothing in the World can happen *amiss* to us; Welcome *Pain*, welcome *Pleasure*, welcome *Loss*, welcome *Gain*, welcome *Disgrace*, welcome *Honour*; for if we have but God our *Friend*, we may securely depend upon it, that whatsoever befalls us is *best* for us.

Who but a *Mad man* therefore would ever espouse the Cause of *Atheism*, or make it his Interest to *exclude* God out of the World? Indeed, were he an *envious*, *malicious*, or *tyrannical* Being, that *repined* at the Happiness of his Creatures, and watched all opportunities to *plague* or *destroy* them, 'twere but reasonable we should endeavour to *quit* our Minds of the *Belief* of him; but to imagine it our *Interest* to believe there is no such

Being in the World as a *Good God*, that out of the immense *Benignity* of his Nature *espouses* our Interest, and *takes care* of our Happiness; that *understands* our Wants, and *compassionates* our Sufferings, and is *able* and *willing* to support and *relieve* us; that requires nothing of us but what is for our good, and will infinitely reward us for doing *that* which is *best* for our selves; that *con- nives* at our Follies, and *pities* our Infirmities, and upon our unfeigned *Repentance* is ready to be *re- conciled* to us, even when we wilfully and *presump- tuously* provoke him; to imagine it, I say, our In- terest to shake off the Belief of such a *blessed* Being as *this*, is the utmost height of *Folly* and *Mad- ness*. For 'twere doubtless a thousand times more tolerable for Men that the *Sun* should be *pulled down* from the Firmament, and all the *Lights* of Heaven *extinguished*, than that the *Belief* of a God should be *banish'd* from the World, the ab- sence of which would *over-spread* Mankind with such a *dismal Night* of Horror and Despair, and Blackness and Darkeness, as would render all *wise* and *considering* Men weary of their Beings, and cause them to *wish* a thousand times over, as for the *utmost* Good they could *devise* for themselves, O that there were such a Being as a *God* at the *Helm* of the World, that so the Affairs of it might be *steered* by an *infinite Power*, that is al- ways *directed* by an *infinite Wisdom*, and always *byass'd* and *inclined* by an *infinite Goodness*? What then can be more *brutish* or *irrational*, than for the sake of a few base Lusts that are the *Scandal* of our Nature, the *Bane* of our Society, the *Vexation* of our Lives, and the *Disturbance* of all our Hap-
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pineness, to banish the *Belief* of a *God* from our Minds, which is the *Foundation* of our Hope, and the only *Support* we can rationally depend on.

IV. The Atheist concludes for that side of the Question which is infinitely the most *unsafe* and *hazardous*. He who believes there is a *God*, and acts accordingly, runs a very *small* and *inconsiderable* Venture, if in the issue of things he should chance to be *mistaken*; he only ventures the *dissatisfying* a few *extravagant* Lusts, the *crossing* some *irregular* Inclinations of his Nature, which if he had *gratified* would have *vexed* and *tormented* him, and *entangled* his Life with a thousand *ill* Circumstances; he only ventures some *Prayers* and some *Tears*, some *Watchings* and *Strugglings* and *Contentions* with himself, and perhaps some *Reproaches* and *Persecutions* for Righteousness sake, in Exchange for which he hath commonly a *healthful* and a *prosperous*, an *even*, *safe* and *contented* Life, a *quiet* and a *Triumphant* Conscience, and a *joyous* Expectation of a blisful *Eternity* to come, which do out-weigh all the *Incommodities* he ventures, all the *Pains* he undergoes, and all the *Pleasures* of which he debars himself; and if in the Conclusion, when he resigns up his Breath, it appears that there is neither *God*, nor *Heaven* nor *Hell*, his Condition will be altogether *as good* as the Atheists, with whom he will *sleep* quietly in the *same* Dust under the same everlasting Insensibility.

But, on the contrary, the Atheist, by *believing* that there is no *God*, and *acting* accordingly, runs the most *desperate* Hazard in the World. For besides that he *throws away* the main Support and Comfort of his Life, and lays himself open to all
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Contingencies, and *resigns* up the *Satisfaction* of a good *Conscience*, together with the *Hope* of a blessed *Futurity*, and all the innumerable *Joys* it abounds with; besides all which, I say, he ventures to be *eternally wretched* and *miserable* in the World to come, and exposes himself *naked* and *defenceless* to the *unquenchable* Wrath of an *everlasting* God; in Exchange for all which he hath no other *present* Compensation, but the Pleasures of a *riotous* and *tumultuary* Life, which do always *die away* in the Enjoyment, and are generally *dash'd* and *sophisticated* with a thousand very *sad* and *uncomfortable* Circumstances. And then if when he concludes this *present* Scene of Life, he should find himself *mistaken* in his *Atheistical* Confidence, and be unexpectedly *summoned* to the Tribunal of *that* God, whose *Being* and *Authority* he hath so peremptorily *denied* and *affronted*, and from thence be *transmitted* into a *dismal* Eternity, there to *languish out* an Everlasting Existence in *remediless* Woes, and *unpitied* Lamentations; how would it *astonish* and *confound* him to find his confident Infidelity *baffled* by such a woeful *Experiment*, when instead of being *asleep* in a state of *Silence* and *Insensibility*, which was the thing he *depended on*, he shall find himself *wasted* to a strange Shore, and there *landed* among *Devils* and *miserable Spirits* in a state of *endless*, *caseless* and *remediless* Calamity! How *blank* and *forlorn* will the *Fool* look, to find himself thus *fatally* mistaken? and yet, for all he knows, *this* may be the *Result* and *Issue* of Things. So that 'tis a very *small* Hazard, you see, that good Men run, compared with *that* of the *Atheist*; for should they

they be mistaken, *their* Condition will be as good as *his* at the winding up of the Bottom; but if they should not, it will be *infinitely* better.

It is storied of a certain Hermite, who being retired from the World, led a very *severe* and *mortified* Life, that being one day met by two Cardinals, who were riding by with a very *Pompous* Equipage, was thus accosted by them, Father, why should you thus *mortifie* and *maccrate* yourself, by retiring from the *Glories* and *Pleasures* of this Life? Suppose now that after all your Religious *Severities*, there should be neither a *God* nor a *future World* to reward you, would it not be *egregious* Folly in you thus to throw away *present* Enjoyments for *future* Nothings? To which the good Man presently return'd this Answer; But, Sirs, suppose there should be a *God* and a *future World* to *punish* you, would it not be *egregious* Folly in you, to run such a *desperate* Venture as you do of being *everlastingly* miserable, for the sake of a few *momentary* Honours and Advancements? Upon which, as the Story saith, the Cardinals being *convinced*, went away very *pensive*. And herein, doubtless, the honest Hermite was very much in the right. For were it a *Moot-point* whether there be a *God* or no, one would think, in a matter of such unspeakable moment, and where the Hazard on each side is so *infinitely unequal*, there is no Man in his Wits but would chuse the *safest* side, and make *that* his Rule and Principle to live by. In this therefore the Atheist is justly chargeable with the most *desperate Folly*, that whereas at *least* he might be *safe*, if not *eternally Happy*, by *believing* that there

there is a God, and *acting* accordingly, he rather chuses to *venture* being eternally miserable, by *believing* there is none, and *acting* as if there were none. In short, this is the plain state of the Case, if I *believe* that God *is*, and *act* consonantly, I shall be *safe* if he be *not*, and eternally *happy* if he be ; whereas if I believe that he is *not*, I am sure to be *miserable* for ever if he be, and am only *safe* from being miserable for ever if he be *not* ; and this being the Case, I leave any Man to judge which of the *two* is in Prudence more *eligible*, the *peradventure* of being *happy* for ever, or of being *miserable* for ever, supposing *both* to be *equally probable*. But,

V. The Atheist concludes for the *unsafe* side of the Question upon the greatest *Uncertainties* in the World. One would think before a Man assented to a Conclusion, the Consequence of which, if he should be *mistaken*, will be for ever *fatal* to him, he should be so *wise* at least as to *look* before he *leap*, and satisfy himself of the *Grounds* he *concludes* on, and not to give up his *Assent* upon every *doubtful* and *uncertain* Appearance. Now that part of the Question which the Atheist *assents* to, is of such *mighty* Consequence as that should it prove *false* he is lost for ever ; and therefore one would think it concerned him to be very *sure* of his *hand*, and take care that his Assent be *founded* upon very *strong* and *undeniable* Evidence, instead of which he *assents* at a *venture*, and grounds his *Belief* upon the most *sandy* Foundations. For,

I. He concludes for a *pure Negative*.

II. He concludes for it upon a *bare Possibility*.

III. He

III. He concludes for it against the *best Evidence* that the *contrary* will admit.

I. He concludes for a *pure Negative*. All Men are agreed, that 'tis a very *hard* thing to prove a *Negative*; but to prove a *pure Negative* is *impossible*, unless the Existence of the thing which it denies *implies* an *express Contradiction*. 'Tis true, where a thing *visibly* exists so that we can perceive as well how it doth *not* exist as how it *doth*, we may with as good Evidence *deny* as *affirm*; but as for *pure Negatives*, which *deny* the very *Existence* of such things as may *possibly* exist, it is impossible to be *certain* of them without an *infinite Understanding*. For before we can be sure that what is *not* in our Understanding is *not* in *Nature*, we must be sure that whatsoever *is* in *Nature*, *is* in our Understanding, otherwise a thousand things may *be*, though we do not *understand* them. As for Instance, Unless I were sure that I had the perfect *Map* or *Geography* of such a Country in my Head, it is impossible I should be *sure* that there is no such *Town*, or *City*, or *Region* belonging thereunto; and so unless I were sure that the *Cosmography* or *Universal Map* of *Nature* were perfectly *delineated* on my *Understanding*, I cannot *positively* affirm that such or such a Being doth *not* actually exist. So that, as a great Divine of our own hath well observed upon this very Argument, after all that can be said *against* a thing this will *still* be *true*, that many things *possibly are* which we know *not* of, and that many things more *may be* than *are*. For unless our Understanding were *extended* to the whole *Compass* of *Nature*, there may be, for all we know, ten thousand things in *Nature* which

are not in our *Understanding*. So that concerning *pure Negatives* we can never be *certain*, unless the things which they deny be absolutely *impossible* and imply, in the very *Notion* of their *Existence*, a *plain Contradiction*; which cannot be said of the *Existence* of *God*. For by *God*, we mean nothing but a Being endowed with all *possible Perfections*; and to say that it is *impossible* that there should be any such Being as is endowed with all the *Perfections* that 'tis *possible* for a Being to be endowed with, is to assert *Possibilities impossible*, which is a *Contradiction in Terms*. Since therefore this *Negative* that there is *no God*, denies that which is *possible* in its *Nature*, and which implies not the least *Shadow* of *Contradiction*, it is *impossible*, supposing it were true, for any *finite Understanding* to be *certain* of it. What Man in his Wits then would ever presume to *deny* the Being of *God*, and to *stake* his everlasting Fate on it, when he knows before-hand that he cannot be *sure* that his Denial is *true*, and that if it prove *false* he is lost for ever. Alas! what is this but to *throw Dice* for our Souls, and to *venture* our Salvation on a *wild Uncertainty*.

II. The Atheist concludes for a *pure Negative* upon a *bare Possibility*. One would think, in a Matter of such infinite moment, Men should at least be so *wise* as not to conclude without *strong Probabilities*, where they can find no *Certainty* to rely on; but so *desperately Fool-hardy* is the Atheist as to suspend his *Faith*, and with that his *Salvation*, upon the *bare Possibility* that there *may* be *no God*. For when he is urged with those Arguments of *God's Being*, that are drawn from the *beautiful*

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Contrivance of the World, he hath no other way to *evade* them, but by endeavouring to demonstrate how by the *necessary* Laws of *Matter* and *Motion*, things might possibly be *shuffled* together as they are without the *Agency* and *Direction* of a God; and yet even in *this* Attempt so many *inextricable* Difficulties present themselves as have *puzzled* and *confounded* the acuteſt Wits that were ever engaged in it; and while with all their *Art* and *Contrivance* they have been framing their *Hypothesis* of the Existence of this World *without* a God, they have been forced not only to *beg* some Principles, but also to *assert* others that upon Examination have been found *repugnant* to the Nature of Things; and when all is done, if *both* were true, yet are they altogether *insufficient* to solve a *thousand* *Phænomena* in Nature. So that the utmost that the most *learned* and *inquisitive* Atheist could ever pretend to, was to advance Atheism to a grand *perhaps*; and by endeavouring to demonstrate how things might *possibly* be as they are *without* a God, to prove that 'tis *possible* there is none: and yet when all is done, their most *ingenious* Endeavours are only a *Demonstration* that the most *acute* and *witty* Men may be *mistaken*. For what a *hopeless* kind of Task is it to shew how *that* may be the Effect of a blind *Chance* or *Necessity*, which hath all the Characters of a wise *Design* and *Contrivance* fairly imprinted on it? How is it possible for an *undesigning* Chance to fit *Means* to *Ends*, or *Ends* to *Natures*? or so to *proportion* Parts to *one another* as to make a *comely* Symmetry in the *whole*, and this in *ten thousand* Instances, and not fail in *one*? How often, as the above-named Author

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from *Tully* discourses, might a Man after he hath shaken together a Sett of Letters in a Bag, fling them out upon the ground, before they would fall into an exact Poem, or make a good Discourse in Prose? And may not a little *Book* be as easily made by *Chance*, as the great *Volume* of the World, in which there is such an *inexhaustible* Treasure of rich *Sense* and *Contrivance*? Or how long might a Man be in sprinkling Colours upon a Canvas with a careless Hand, before they would happen to fall into the exact Picture of a Man? And is a *Man* easier made by *Chance* than his *Picture*? Why may we not as well conceive the most *regular* Building in the World to be framed by a *casual* Concourse of *Stone* and *Iron* and *Timber*, as that these *blind* and *rambling* parts of Matter should chance to place themselves so *orderly* in the World, and to observe such an exact Harmony and Decorum as if they kept Time with the Musical Laws of some almighty Mind, that composed their Measures, and regulated their Motions up and down in the Universe.

But granting the Atheist what he so *eagerly* though *unsuccessfully* contends for, that it is possible all this might happen by meer *Chance*, and consequently that there may be no God in the World; would any Man in his Wits found his Faith upon a *meer Possibility*, when 'twill be as much as his Soul is worth if he should happen to be *mistaken*? It is possible that should he throw himself from the Top of a high Steeple, the Air between may be so condensed as to bear him up and preserve him from being dash'd in pieces by the Fall; but would you not think the Man stark mad that should venture his

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Neck upon that *Possibility*? And yet it is a far more desperate Venture that the Atheist makes, by thus *hazarding* his Soul to everlasting *Destruction*, upon a bare possibility that there may be no God to *destroy* him.

III. The Atheist concludes against the *best Evidence* that the contrary will admit. For that there is a God, we have as full Evidence as the Matter could bear if there were one, and to require more is *absurd* and *unreasonable*. For let us at present *suppose*, but for Argument-sake, that there were such an *infinite Spirit* in the World; a Spirit that were as *wise*, and as *good*, and as *powerful* as he whom we call God is supposed to be; supposing, I say, there were such a Spirit *actually* existing, we could not have *greater Evidence* of it than we have *already* that he *actually* exists. For we could not see him with our Eyes, because we suppose him to be a *Spirit*; we could not demonstrate his Existence *a priori*, or from any Cause, because being the First Cause he must be *uncaused* or *Self-originated*. It remains therefore that the only Demonstration we could give of his Being, is that which we call *a posteriori*, or from such *sensible Effects* as can only be ascribed to the *Power*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* of such a Being; and of such Effects as *these* we have *infinite* Instances before us. For, in sum, we have all this *visible* World about us, whose *changeable* Nature demonstrates it to be the Effect of some *superiour* Cause, and whose unspeakable *Vastness*, *Beauty* and *Contrivance* argues it to be the Effect of some most *wise*, and *good*, and *powerful* Cause. For as to the first, whatsoever is *change-*

able cannot *self-exist*, but will necessarily proceed from some *superiour Cause*; because whatsoever *Self-exists* is necessarily, and whatsoever is necessarily is *always the same*; that which is without any Cause cannot *but* be; and that which is *thus* or *thus* without any Cause, cannot but be *so* or *so* for ever; and consequently if the World were of it *self* without any Cause, it would not only be necessarily, but also be *such as it is* necessarily and unchangeably; but contrariwise we plainly perceive that it runs a perpetual Course of *Change* and *Alteration*, that its Parts are continually altering their Figure, and shifting their Places with one another, whereas if this *Part* were of it *self* necessarily, as it must be if the *Whole* be so, it would necessarily be *where* it is and *what* it is eternally.

And since the *Mutability* of this World argues it to be the effect of some *superiour Cause*, I would fain know whether, considering the *Vastness*, and *Beauty*, and *Contrivance* of it, it be not most reasonable to attribute it to such an *all-good*, *all-wise*, and *Almighty* Cause as we suppose *God* to be. For what less than an *infinite Power* can bear a due Proportion to such a *vast* and *immense* World? Should you enter into a *vast* and *magnificent* Palace, and find no Creature in it, but a company of *Mice* or *Weasels*, could you possibly believe that these *impotent Vermin* built it? And yet the building of the most Royal Palace doth not so much *exceed* the Power of these *weak Animals*, as the building of *this* World doth the Power of any Cause but a *God*. But then if we consider the *infinite Number* of Beings in the World that are *capable* of happiness, and the *vast*

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Provisions that are made to *entertain* them accordingly to their *several* Capacities, we cannot but thence conclude that the *Power* which made them was *acted* by an *infinite Goodness*. Lastly, that we consider the *rare* and *admirable* Contrivance of the *several Parts* of the World ; how *perfect* each one is in its *Kind*, how exactly *fitted* to each other, and what a lovely *Symmetry* and *Proportion* they all make in the *whole*, how can we otherwise imagine but that that *Power* and *Goodness* which caused it was *directed* by an *infinite Wisdom*? So that the World is *such* an Effect as openly *proclaims* its Cause to be a *God* ; and if *this* Evidence of God's Existence will not *convince* Men, they are *impreguably* fortified against *all* Conviction ; and if God should carry them into those *infinite Spaces* that are *beyond* the Limits of this World, and there command a *New* One into Being, while they stood *looking on*, and saw it springing out of nothing, they might with as good reason conclude *that* World to be nothing but a *fortuitous* Concourse of *insensible* Parts of Matter, as they now do that *this* is so. So that, in fine, he that *denies* God after all these *Demonstrations* which he hath given of himself, is out of the *reach* of Argument, and if he *pursue* his own *Principles*, can never be convinced by any *possible* Reasons. And what a desperate Folly is it for Men to embrace a Belief, which, should they be *mistaken*, draws after it *everlasting Ruine*, when they have all the Reasons to the *contrary* that the Matter is *capable* of? What is this but to *shut* their *Eyes*, and cast themselves *blindfold* on their own *Destruction*, and to resolve to *wink hard* and be-

lieve *against* all possible Reason, that so they may ruin themselves without any *Interruption*?

VI. And lastly, The Atheist plainly *contradicts* himself in his *own Conclusion*. For by denying that God is, he necessarily denies the *Possibility* of his Being. For if he be *not*, it is impossible he should *ever* be; because Eternity of Being is included in the *Notion* of him. For when we speak of *God*, we mean by him a Being that is *before* all Causes, and the *Cause* of all Causes, and that therefore *oweth* not his Being to any prior Cause, but doth *necessarily, independently, and eternally* exist. So that if he be *not now*, he cannot be *at all*, because he must *begin* to be, which is contradictory to the very essential *Notion* and *Idea* of him. For if he should *ever begin* to be, he cannot be *Eternal*; and if he be *not Eternal*, he cannot be *God*. So that to say God is *not*, is by necessary Consequence to say he *cannot* be at all; and yet by a *God*, we mean at the same time *a Being that is endowed with all possible Perfections that a Being is capable of*. Wherefore as by saying that God is *not*, we do by consequence assert that it is *impossible* he should *ever* be; so by asserting that it is *impossible* he should *ever* be, we do in effect assert this gross Contradiction, That it is impossible *such a Being* should *ever be*, as includes all the *Perfections* that are *possible* to a Being. Thus in the same Breath we pronounce that God *can* and *cannot* be, that 'tis *possible* he *is*, and yet *impossible* he should *ever be*. For by saying that he is a Being endowed with all the *possible Perfections* of Being, we expressly affirm that it is *possible* he *may be*; but by saying that there is

no such Being *actually* existing, we do as expressly assert that it is *impossible* he should ever be. He therefore who asserts that God is *not*, doth by necessary Consequence assert this *express* Contradiction, *that it is impossible there should ever be a Being as perfect as it is possible.* And when if there be a God, Mens Eternal Fate depends but upon believing that he is, and *acting* accordingly, what a monstrous Folly is it for Men to *contradict* themselves to *deny* him? What is this but to *stake* their Souls upon it, that the very *first Principle* of Reasoning is *false*, and put their Fate upon this *desperate* Issue, that unless *both* Parts of a *Contradiction* prove *true*, they must *inevitably* perish for ever?

And now having shewn you from what *malignant* Causes Atheism springs, and how *desperately foolish* and *unreasonable* it is in it self, let us all endeavour, by the *serious* Consideration of what hath been said, to *fortifie* our Minds against it. And since this Proposition, That *God is*, is the prime Foundation of *all* Religion, it concerns us all to use our utmost Diligence to *establish* our Minds in the *firm* and *stedfast* Belief of it; and *this* we cannot fail to *do*, if we heartily *endeavour* it. For the Arguments of God's Being do shine all round about us with such a *clear* and *convincing* Light, that we need do no more than just *open* our *Eyes* to it, and *dispel* those mischievous Causes from our *Wills*, that *hide* and *obscure* it from our *Understandings*. And when once we have thoroughly *settled* the *Belief* of God's Being in our *Minds*, it will mightily *influence* all our Powers of *Action*; it will *invite* our *Hope*, and

alarm our Fear, and *Address* to every Passion in us that is capable of *Persuasion*, and be an *ever-living* Spring of Religion within us ; for God is an Object so infinite *Great* in himself, and of such infinite *Moment* and *Concernment* to us, that 'tis next to *impossible* we should *firmly* believe that he *is*, without being *vigorously* impress'd with *religious* Affections upon the Consideration of his *Being*.

C H A P.

C H A P. IV.

Of the Necessity of acknowledging the Divine Providence, to oblige us to be truly Religious.

TH E main Influence which the Belief of a God hath upon the Minds of Men, proceeds immediately from the Belief of his Providence, without which we are no way concerned or interested in him. For a God without a Providence is a solitary kind of Being that lives alone from the World, altogether retired within himself, and never looks abroad, or any ways intermeddles with any thing without; and what have we to do with a Being that hath nothing to do with us or our affairs, but lives apart from us in some unaccessible Retirement, where neither we can go to him, nor he come to us? So that it is by his Providence that all Correspondence and Intercourse between God and his Creatures is maintained; which being taken away, he is nothing to us, and we are as nothing to him. For what doth it signifie to us that there is a certain excellent Being called God, sitting on the Top of the Heavens with his Arms folded in his Bosom, and who doth nothing there but enjoy himself in a quiet Contemplation of his own Perfections, without regarding any thing without him, or doing either good or hurt

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to the World? Such a God is nothing but a great Cypher in the World, that only makes a *glorious* Flourish, but is as *insignificant* as no God at all. For to what purpose should we *pray* to a God that is not at leisure to *hear* us, or *hope* in a God that is not concerned to *help* us? What should move us to *love* a God that bestows no *Good*, or to *fear* a God that inflicts no *Evil*, or to *obey* a God that hath no *Regard* of our *Actions*? Why should we *thank* him if we *receive* nothing from him? For what should we *praise* him if he be no ways *beneficial* to the World? And wherein should we *imitate* him if he *sits still* and does *nothing*, and exercises neither *Wisdom*, nor *Goodness*, nor *Justice*, nor *Mercy* towards any thing without him? All which *Perfections* of the Deity without a *Providence* are utterly *void* and *useless*. For his *Providence* is the great *Sphere* of *Activity* wherein he *exercises* and *displays* his *Perfections*, wherein his *Power* executes the *Contrivances* of his *Wisdom*, and his *Wisdom* *contrives* the *Methods* of his *Goodness*; so that without his *Providence* all his *Perfections* will signify *nothing*. For what doth that *Wisdom* signify that *contrives* nothing? Or that *Power* which *doth* nothing? Or that *Goodness* that is *good* for nothing? Or that *Justice* which *distributes* nothing? And yet just such *Cyphers* are all the *Perfections* of God, suppose there is no *Providence* wherein to *employ* and *exercise* them. And if once we *vacate* and *extinguish* these *Perfections* of God which are the *Graces* which render him so *Sublime* and *Adorable*, what *Reason* can move us to *Adore* and *Worship* him? For why should we concern our *selves* with a God who concerns *himself*

self with no Body, and that either hath neither *Power*, nor *Wisdom*, nor *Goodness*, or, which to us is the same, makes no *use* for them? So that the *denial* of God's *Providence*, you see, directly cuts in sunder all the *Ties* of Religion, by rendring him an *insignificant* Being to the World.

In the Prosecution of this Argument, I shall shew; First, *What* of the *'Divine Providence* it is that is *necessary* to be *believed*, in order to our being *truly Religious*. Secondly, *What Evidence* there is to *create* in us *this* Belief. Thirdly, The *Insufficiency* and Unreasonableness of the common *Pre-
tences* to *Infidelity* in this Matter.

S E C T. I.

What it is we are to believe of the Divine Providence.

IN General, It is not *sufficient* that we believe *this* or *that* Part or Branch of it, but we must acknowledge the *Whole*; every *Part* whereof the *Whole* consists being *pregnant* with very *powerful* Obligations to Religion. Now the *Whole* of *Providence* consists in God's continual *Conservation*, *Possession*, *Inspection*, and *Disposal* of all Things, and *Government* of the Rational World. So that the *Whole* of it includes these Five Parts or Branches.

I. God's continual *Conservation* of all things.

II. His continual *Possession* of all things.

III. His

III. His continual *Inspection* of all things.

IV. His continual *Ordering* and *Disposal* of all things.

V. His continual *Government* of the Rational World. All which, as I shall shew, are highly necessary to be believed, in order to our being truly Religious.

I. To oblige us to be truly Religious, it is necessary we should believe that God continually upholds and conserves all things. That he alone is the great *Atlas* on whose Almighty Shoulders the whole Frame of Things depends. For though the Works of Humane Art do often stand many Ages after the Workman's Hand is withdrawn from them, yet the reason is because there is Something between them and Nothing, viz. the pre-existing Matter of which they are formed; whereas the Works of God being all produced out of Nothing, have nothing between them, but that creative Power which produced them. And therefore as Mans Works would necessarily perish were that pre-existing Matter taken away, which stands between them and Nothing, so God's Works would necessarily resolve into nothing, should that creative Power be withdrawn which stands between them and Nothing. In short, pre-existing Matter is the Basis of our Works, and creative Power of God's; and therefore as our Works must cease to be, were their pre-existing Matter withdrawn; so God's Works must cease to be, were his creative Power withdrawn. So that 'tis the same Almighty Power which raised the World out of Nothing that keeps it from sinking into nothing; and that it is this Moment

ment is as much the Effect of Divine Power, as that it *was* the Moment when it was first created. For the World was no more able to give it self the *second* Moment of Being than it was the *first*, and the *third* than the *second*, and so on through all the *past* and *future* Moments of its Being. For *one* Moment of Being is as much as *another*, and therefore to give a *second* requires the same Power as to give a *first*; and if so, then each *succeeding* Moment of the World's *Duration* and *Continuance* must be derived from the Cause of the *first* Moment of its *Being*. So that the *Creation* and *Conservation* of the World, is only the *same* Act *continuing* and *flowing* on (like a *Line* from a *Mathematical Point*) from the *first* instant of its *Being* to the *last* period of its *Duration*. And so the Scripture represents it: Thus, *Nehemiah* 9. 6. *Thou, even thou art Lord alone; thou hast made Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens with all their Hosts, the Earth and all things that are therein, and thou preservest them all; and Acts* 17. 25, 28. *He giveth to all life and breath and all things, in him we live, and move, and have our being; and Heb.* 1. 3. he is said to *uphold all things by the word of his Power*.

Which is a Truth of that vast Importance to Religion, that it is hardly conceivable how it can *subsist* without it. For while we look on our selves as Beings that are *independent* from God, that do live, and breath, and *subsist* of our selves, without any new *Supplies* of Being from him, why should we *serve* and *worship* him? What reason have we to *trust* in a Being from whom we expect no *Support*? Or to render *Homage* to a Being on whom we have no *Dependence*? So that by

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disbelieving this Part of the *Divine Providence*, we do in effect cut off all *Intercourse* between God and our selves, and lay an *Imbargo* on Religion. For if we *depend* not on him, what have we to *do* with him? And if we *owe* not our *Lives* and *Beings* to his Power, what right hath he to *exact* our *Obedience*? But while we look upon our selves as Beings that *hang* upon him, and *derive* every Breath and Moment of our Beings from him, so that should he *withdraw* from us that Almighty Arm that *sustains* us, and leave us to *subsist* of *our selves*, we must presently *drop* into nothing, how can we forbear, without infinite *Stupidity* and *Ingratitude*, to devote *our selves* and all our *Powers* and *Faculties* to his Service? For what a *stupid* Wretch should I be, should I not study to please *him* upon whom I know my *Life* and *Being* depends, and who merely by *withdrawing* his Hand from underneath me, can let me *sink* into nothing when he pleases? And what an *ungrateful* Wretch should I be, should I refuse to *honour*, *worship* and *obey* him, from whom I draw *every* Breath I breathe, and derive *new* Life and Being every moment?

II. It is also necessary we should believe that God *possesses* all things; that he hath not *given away* this World from himself, and cast it out of his own *Disposal* as a common *Scramble* among Men; but that he hath *reserved* to himself an *absolute*, *unalienable* and *independent* Propriety in all that we *enjoy* and *possess*. For all things *owe* their Being to *him*, as he is the *Creator* and *Upholder* of them; and therefore whatsoever *is* must necessarily be *his*, because it *is* by his *Power* and *Providence*. And if we who act by the Power of God, and can do no-
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thing without him, may claim a right to the Effects of our *Invention* and *Industry*, how much more may God who *contrived* and *produced* all things by his own *independent* Wisdom and Power? For our Wisdom and Power being God's, he hath a *Sovereign Right* to all the *Effects* of them; but his Wisdom and Power are absolutely *his own*, without Dependence on any *superiour Cause*; and therefore whatsoever are the Effects of them must necessarily be his by a most *absolute* and *independent* Propriety. And accordingly he is stiled the *Possessor of Heaven and Earth*, Gen. 14. 19. And *Moses* tells his People, *Behold, the Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens is the Lord's, the Earth also and all that is therein*, Deut. 10. 14. and the *Earth* (saith the Psalmist) is the Lord's, and the *fulness thereof, the World and they that dwell therein*; for he hath founded it upon the *Sea*, and prepared it upon the *Floods*, Psal. 24. 1. and 50. 12. And the *Heavens* (saith he again) are *thine*, the *Earth also is thine*; as for the *World and the fulness thereof thou hast founded them*, Psal. 89. 11.

God therefore being the *Supreme Proprietor* of the World, there is nothing can be justly *ours* but by his Will and Grant; and nothing can be ours by his Will, but what is *honestly* and *justly* ours. So that for us to *seize* upon any part of the World by *Fraud*, or *Violence*, or *Oppression*, is to *trespass* upon God and *invade* his Property, and to *tear* his World from him *against* his Will. Thus whatsoever we possess by *Wrong*, we possess as *Robbers* and *Invaders* of God, and whatsoever we enjoy by *Right*, we enjoy as *Tenants* to the great *Landlord* of the World; and without owning and ac-
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knowledging this, we cannot be *truly Religious*. For if the World be not *his*, why should we pray to him for what we want of it, or praise him for what we enjoy? Why should we patiently submit to his Disposal when he deprives us of what we have? Or thankfully acknowledge his Goodness, when he supplies us with what we need? Why should we employ our Possessions in his Service, or think our selves obliged to return him any part of them in pious or charitable Works? In a word, why should we be contented with a small share, and abide by that unequal Division of Things that is made in the World, and not endeavour to encrease our own poor Heap by pilfering from other Mens that are ten times bigger than ours? Whence are these Obligations but from this Supposal, that God is the Supreme Proprietor and Possessor of all Things; which being denied, there remains no solid Foundation of Reason for any of these great and necessary Duties of Religion.

III. To oblige us to be truly religious, it is also necessary we should believe that God is present with and inspects all things, that his Divine Substance is diffused through and circumfused about all things, so as to penetrate them within as an universal Soul, and contain them without as an universal Place. For so the Jewish Doctors are wont to call God *Hamakom*, that is to say, the Place or Continent of all things; because all things are encompassed by him, and do live and move within his infinite Bosom. For so in Scripture the Divine Substance is described, as spreading it self through and around the World, even to the utmost possibility of Extension. Whither (saith the Psalmist) shall I go from

from thy Spirit, or whether shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in Hell, behold thou art there; if I take the Wings of the Morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the Sea, even there shall thy Hand lead me, and thy right Hand shall hold me, Psal. 139. 7, 8, 9, 10. And behold (saith Solomon) the Heavens of Heavens cannot contain thee, 1 King. 8. 27. yea, do not I fill Heaven and Earth, saith the Lord himself, Jer. 23. 24.

Now though God's Omnipresence be strictly an Attribute of his Essence, and not a part of his Providence; yet 'tis such an Attribute as includes his universal Providence, and without supposing of which, an universal Providence can hardly be conceived. For if he co-exists and be present with all things, he must be supposed to operate upon them; because where-ever he is, his infinite Wisdom and Power and Goodness are; which in their own Nature are such active Perfections as cannot be present where such a world of things are to be done, and sit still and do nothing. For how can we conceive that infinite Wisdom should be present where a world of things are to be ordered, and yet order nothing? That infinite Power should be present where a world of things are to be done, and yet do nothing? Or that infinite Goodness should be present where a world of good is to be done, and do no good at all? Such an idle, restive Presence as this, is utterly inconsistent with such active Perfections. So that the Omnipresence of an infinite Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness necessarily supposes an universal Providence, and without such an Omnipresence an universal Providence can hard-

ly be conceived. For how can God be present by any *Power*, or *Vertue* or *Efficacy* of his Nature, in any place from whence the real *Substance* of his *Divinity* is excluded? How can he operate by his own immediate *Efficiency* where he is not? Or extend his *Divine Power*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* over all things, except his *Divine Substance* in which these *Attributes* are, be co-extended with them. Every Agent must be where it acts, because it acts from its *Being*, and it is as possible for that which is not to operate, as for that which is to operate where it is not; and hence *Socrates* being asked how it was possible for one God to order all the Affairs of the World? returns this Answer, Τοσούτον καὶ τοιούτων ἔστι τὸ θεῖον ὥσθ' ἅμα ἅπαντα ὁρᾷ καὶ πάντα ἀκούει, καὶ πάντα καὶ παρῆναι καὶ ἅμα πάντων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι. i. e. God is so great and vast a Being, as that he hears and sees all things together, and is present every where, and takes care of all things at the same time. Thus God's *Omnipresence*, you see, doth so include his *universal Providence*, that with it 'tis necessary, and without it inconceivable.

And then from his Presence with all things, necessarily follows his *Inspection* of all things; because where-ever he is, his *infinite Knowledge* is, which is *inseparable* from his *Being*; and where-ever his *infinite Knowledge* is, it must necessarily have a *through Prospect* of all things round about him, so that nothing can be concealed from its *Inspection*. For so the Scripture assures us, that the *Eyes of the Lord* run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, 2 Chron. 16. 9. and, that the *Eyes of the Lord* are in every place beholding the evil and good, Prov. 15. 3. and, in a word, that all things are open
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and naked to the Eyes of him with whom we have to do, Heb. 4. 13.

Both which are Truths of *vast* Importance to Religion. For while Men look upon God as a Being that dwells at a *great Distance* from them, they will be ready enough to conclude *Procul à Jove, procul à Fulmine*, that being *far off* from him, they are out of his *reach*, and beyond the *Danger* of his *Thunderbolts*; and that he is too far removed from them either to *succour* them when they want his *Aid*. or to *punish* them when they deserve his *Displeasure*; which must needs extinguish both their *Hope* and *Fear*, which are the Master-Springs of their Religion. And tho we should believe him to be *present* with us, yet unless we also believe that he hath a *full Inspection* into all our *Actions* and *Affairs*, we shall have no *Regard* to him. For if he *sees* not into our *Affairs*, how can he *succour* and *relieve* us? And if he cannot *relieve* us, to what end should we *hope* in him, *depend* upon him, or *pray* to him? And unless he hath a *perfect* *Insight* in all our *Actions*, how should he *reward* or *punish* us; and if he cannot *reward* us, what should *encourage*, if he cannot *punish* us, what should *terrifie* us to our *Duty* to him? But if we look upon him as a Being that is always *with* us, and *where ever* we are *surrounds* us with his boundless *Presence*; that *includes* and *penetrates* every part of our *Substance*, *sees* into our *inmost* *Thoughts* and *Purposes*, and *ransacks* every *Corner* of our *Souls* with his *all-seeing* *Eye*, and hath a *through* and *perfect* *Prospect* of all our *Affairs* and *Concerns*, we cannot without infinite *Force* to our *Reason* forbear *fear-*

ing and reverencing, serving and adoring him.

IV. To fasten the Obligation of Religion upon us it is also necessary that we believe that God continually orders and disposes of all things; that he is the Spring of all the Motions of this great Machine of the World, that sets every Wheel and Cause agoing, and by his all-commanding Influence maintains, directs and over-rules their Motions; and that there is nothing happens in the World, whether by Nature, or Chance, or Design, but by his Ordination and Disposal; that even those natural Causes which are necessarily determined to such particular Courses and Effects, are influenced and conducted by him, and that whensoever they stray from their Courses, suspend or precipitate their Motions, or move counter to their natural Tendencies, it is by his Order and Direction; that 'tis he who derives and guides the Heavenly Bodies, impresses the Degrees and chalks out the Paths of their Motions, and by his own Almighty Hand turns round those stupendous Wheels in a perpetual Revolution. For so the Scripture tells us, that he makes his Sun to shine upon the good and bad, *Matth. 5. 45.* and that at his Beck and Command that those vast Bodies of Light exhale the Vapours of the Earth and Sea, and dissolve them down again in Hail, and Rain, and Snow. For so we are told that tis he who covers the Heavens with Clouds, and prepares the Rain for the Earth; that sends forth his Commandment unto the Earth; and giveth Snow like Wool, and scattereth the hoar Frost like Ashes, and casteth forth his Ice like Morfels, and sendeth forth his Word and melteth them, and causes the Wind to

blow and the Waters flow, Psalm 147. 8, 15, 16, 17, 18. that the Fire, and Hail, and Snow, and Vapours, and strong Winds do fulfil his Word, Psalm 148. 8. And in a word, that 'tis by his Order and Influence that the Earth sends up its Sap into the Seeds and Roots of Herbs, and Corn and Plants, and causes them to spring and grow, and that all Animals do propagate their Kind, and still replenish the Store-houses of Nature; for so we are told, that he cloaths the grass of the Field, and arrays the Lilies in all their glory, Matth. 2. 28, 29, 30. and that he causes the Grass to grow for the Cattle, and Herb for the use of Man, that he may bring forth Food out of the Earth, Psalm 104. 14.

And then as for fortuitous and casual Events, which depend upon accidental and irregular Causes, as a Man's being hit with an Arrow let fly at random, or brained with a Stone falling from the Top of an House, we must believe that they are all ordered, directed, and over-ruled by God; so as that to him there is nothing casual or contingent; and tho there are many things happen, of which there was no Necessity in their immediate Causes, yet do they as necessarily depend upon the Will and Power of the first Cause of all, as the Rising and Setting of the Sun, and Ebbing and Flowing of the Sea. So that how fortuitous soever these things may be in respect of the Design and natural Tendency of second Causes, yet none of them ever happen besides the Purpose and Intention of God, who foresees and designs them before they come to pass, and directs and levels them to his own most wise and holy Ends and Purposes. For so the Arrow which the Soldier let fly at Random

was levelled by God at *Ahab's* Breast, so that his Death was *Chance* in respect of the *Soldier* who shot the Arrow, but *Design* in God who directed it; and accordingly, *Prov. 16. 33.* we are told that *the Lot is cast into the Lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord.* And so in the Case of *Chance-Medley*, when a Man accidentally kills another without any *Design* or *Intention*, tho it be mere *Accident* in him, 'tis *Council* and *Design* in God, who, as the Scripture expresses it, *delivers the Man he slays into his Hand,* *Exod. 21. 13.*

And then Lastly, As for those Events which happen by the *Design* of free and rational Agents, it is necessary we should believe that they are all over-ruled by God too; that whatever befalls us in this World whether it be by the good or ill *Design* of Men or Angels, is for good, and just, and holy Ends, either permitted or determined by the sovereign Disposer of all Events; so that without his wise Permission or Determination, neither Angels, Men, nor Devils can do us either good or hurt; that every good thing we receive from them, only passes to us through their Hands from God, and that they are only the Channels and Conveyances of the overflowing Streams of his infinite Bounty; and that when ever we suffer any ill from them, they are but the Rods in God's Hand, wherewith he chastens and corrects us; that he hath the over-ruling Disposal of all the Ills which they inflict upon us, and can render their Stings a Sovereign Balm, and their rankest Poyson Medicinal to us; so that the Malice being in God's Disposal, can effect nothing but what he will have it; and if it doth us hurt, 'tis his Executioner,

ner, but if he pleases it shall do good, and like Leaches applied by a skilful Physician, that draw away our *Disease* while it is sucking our blood. For so God made the *Malice* of *Joseph's* Brethren the means of his *Advancement* in *Egypt*; and by the *Covetousness* of *Judas*, and *Cruelty* of the *Jews*, advanced the holy *Jesus* to his own right *Hand*, and executed his Purpose to redeem Mankind. Thus God over-rules the Actions of Men, and when he pleases directs them quite contrary to their Intentions; for the way of *Man*, saith the Prophet, is not in himself, it is not in *Man* that walketh to direct his steps, Jer. 10. 23. It is the *Man* that walks and acts, but it is *God* alone that leads his Way, and directs his Actions to what End he pleases.

All which it is necessary we should believe in order to our being truly religious. For while we look upon God as a *Foreigner* in the World, that hath altogether retired himself from the Affairs of it, and abandoned it to the Disposal of blind *Chance* or *Necessity*, he must stand for a *Cypher* in our Esteem, and signifie no more to us than the *Emperor* of the *World in the Moon*, who for all we know may be a *Glorious* and *Powerful* Prince, but is so far removed from us and our Affairs, that he can do us neither good nor hurt. And if God intermeddle not with those Goods and Evils which happen here below, what doth he signifie to us who live apart from him in another World, from which he is wholly retired and withdrawn? But if we firmly believe that there is nothing befalls us, whether it be in the Course of *Nature*, or by *Chance*, or *Design*, but by his Order and

Direction, we must lay aside our *Reason* and *Humanity*, if for every *Good* we want, or do receive, we do not apply our selves to him with *humble*, and *submissive*, *thankful* and *ingenuous* Minds; and if under every *Evil* that we feel or fear, we do not resign up our *Wills* and lift up our *Eyes* to him, as to the sole *Arbitrator* of our *Fate*. For where should we pay our *Thanks*, or whence should we expect our *Supplies* and *Deliverances*, but to him who is the *Fountain* of all *Good*, and from him who is the supreme *Moderator* of all *Events*? Who is there in *Heaven* or *Earth* whom we are so much concerned to please, and so much obliged to acknowledge and submit to, so much engaged to trust to and rely on, as him who hath all our *Fortunes* in his *Hands*, and the absolute *Disposal* of every thing in which we are or may or can be any way interested or concerned? So that the *Belief* of God's over-ruling *Providence* hath every *Link* of our *Duty* fastened to it in a strong and rational *Concatenation*, and if it be loosened from this Principle, the whole *Chain* must necessarily fall in sunder.

V. And lastly, To oblige us to be truly religious, it is also necessary we should believe God that is the *Supreme Governour* of the *Rational World*; which is a distinct Branch of *Providence* from the former. For all things whatsoever are subject to God's *Order* and *Disposal*, but in strictness of Speech 'tis only *rational Beings* that are subject to his *Government*. For *Government* supposes *Laws*, and *Laws* Rewards and *Punishments*, of which *rational Beings* alone are capable, they alone having the power to *deliberate*, and upon

Deliberation to *choose* what is good, and *refuse* what is Evil, without which no Being can *deserve* either to be *rewarded* or *punished*. So that the Government of God in strictness of Speech, respects only the *rational World* consisting of *Angels* and *Men*.

As for the Government of *Angels* 'tis impossible we should understand any *more* of it than what God hath *revealed*, because tho *they* converse with *us* and our *Affairs*, yet we do not converse with *them*; our *Spiritual Nature* by which we are near *allied* to them being *shut up* in *Matter*, which like a *Wall of Partition* divides us from them, and *hinders* us from *looking over* into their *World*, and from *seeing* their *Nature* and *Operations*, and *surveying* their *Polity* and *Government*. Indeed *so far* as we understand their *Natures*, we may easily understand the *Laws* by which God *Governs* them; because we know God's *Laws* are always adapted to the *Natures* of things; and consequently since we know that they are *rational* Creatures, we may conclude from thence, that whatsoever is *fit* and *decorous* for rational Creatures as such, they stand obliged to by the *Law* of their *Natures*. But since there are particular *Powers* and *Properties* in their *Natures* which we understand *not*, 'tis impossible we should understand all the *particular* *Laws* by which they are Governed. Only thus much in general we *know*, that the whole Order of *Angelical Beings* were from the first Moment of their Creation subjected to *Laws* fitted to their *Nature*; by which *natural* *Laws* they stood obliged to obey their Creator in all his *positive* Commands and In-

stitutions; and that *these* Laws whatsoever they were both *natural* and *positive* were established in *Rewards* and *Punishments*, by which if they continued in *Obedience*, they were to continue for ever in their most *blissful* Ranks and Stations; but if they *rebelled* were immediately to be banished thence into everlasting *Wretchedness* and *Misery*; that a *certain Order* of these *Angelical Beings*, excited either by their *Pride*, or *Envy*, or *sensual Affections*, did under their Head or Chieftain revolt from God by *transgressing* some *natural* or *positive* Law, for which they were *expelled* the *high Territories* of Happiness, and *driven* into these *lower Parts* of the World, where under the Prince of their Rebellion they have ever since *waged War* against God and Man; that in this state of War they are under the *Restraint* of God's *almighty Power*, who sets *Bounds* to their Power and Malice which it cannot pass, and *determines* it to what *Ends* and *Purposes* he pleases; employing it sometimes to *try* and *chasten* good Men, sometimes to *execute* his Wrath upon the *Children of Disobedience*, and sometimes again letting it *loose* merely to *display* his own Almighty Power in its *Defeat* and *Overthrow*; in which State they are reserved as *Prisoners at large* to the *Judgment* of the *great Day*; whereby together with *wicked men* they shall be *sentenced* and *confined* to everlasting *Flames* and *Darkness*; that the good Angels in *reward* of their *constant Obedience* are *continued* and *fixed* in a most *blissful* Condition, in which they enjoy the *constant Smiles* of God, and the *unspeakable Pleasure* of being *entirely resigned* to his Will, who upon all Occasions sends them to and fro in the

World,

World, as the great *Messengers* and *Ministers* of his Providence, to *Minister* to the Recovery of recoverable Sinners, and to *pour out the Vials* of his *Wrath* upon the *obstinate* and *unreclaimable*; to *assist*, *protect* and *comfort* good men while they *live*, and when they *depart* from hence, to *conduct* their *Spirits* through the *airy Territories* of the wicked Angels into those *blissful Mansions* that are prepared to receive them till the *Resurrection*; at which time their Part will be to *summon* and *gather* both the *good* and *bad* before the Tribunal of Christ, to receive their *final Sentence* to everlasting *Weal* or *Wo*.

This is the *main* of what we know concerning God's *Government* of *Angels*; the *sincere* Belief of which will be of vast Advantage to us in the whole Course of our Religion. For since there is such a mighty *Colony* of evil Angels *roving* about the World, *watching* all Opportunities to lay *Snares* in our way, and to tempt us into their *Revolt* and *Ruin*; and since their *Design* in tempting us *now*, is only to get us into their *Power*, that so they may *torment* us *hereafter*, how much doth it concern us to *guard* and *defend* our selves against their *Evil Motions* and *Suggestions*, lest by *complying* with them, we give them opportunity to *train* us on from *one degree* of wickedness to *another*, till they have made us *provoke* the Almighty to *cut* us off, and *abandon* us for ever to their *Rage* and *Fury*; and since they are all of them under his *Restraint*, and can proceed no *farther* in their *mischievous* Designs against us, than *he* lets loose his Chain to them, how should this encourage us manfully to *struggle* and *contend* against them; since if

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we do, we may depend upon it, that God in whose Power they are, will either command them off, or at least not permit them to over-power us with Temptation. And since by God's Permission there are great Flocks of good Angels always hovering about us, to guard us against those malignant ones, and to prompt us to good, as they prompt us to evil, and with their holy Inspirations to counterminish their impure Suggestions, how much doth it import us to cherish and reverence every pious Thought and Motion, since for all we know it may be the Whisper of some Angel of God, who by these and such like holy Injections is now struggling with the Powers of Darkness, to rescue our Souls out of their hands. And since these blessed and benevolent Spirits do by God's Appointment pitch their Tents about good Men, while they live and convoy them safely to the Seat of the Blessed when they die, how should this encourage bad Men to be good, and good Men to persevere in well doing; since they place and continue themselves under the blessed Patronage of Angels, to be conducted safely by them through this perillous Sea to the calm Regions of Eternal Light? Thus the Belief of God's Government of Angels, so far as he hath thought good to reveal it to us, very much conduces to a Holy Life.

But that which more nearly concerns us, and hath a more immediate Influence on our Practice, is his Government of Men; the Belief of which is indispensably necessary to render us truly religious. Now concerning this Government of God over Men, there are seven things necessary to be believed.

I. That

I. That the great *End* of God's Government is the *Welfare* of *Mankind*.

II. That in order to this *End*, God hath given us *Laws* for the *Regulation* and *Government* of our *Actions*.

III. That to *secure* our Obedience to *these* *Laws* he hath *derived* his Authority upon all *lawful* *Sovereignities* to Govern us *according* to them.

IV. That he is ready to *contribute* to us all *necessary* *Assistance*, to enable us to *observe* *these* *Laws*.

V. That the *Assistance* he *contributes* to us is such as supposes us *free* *Agents*, and *concurs* with and *maintains* our *natural* *Freedom*.

VI. That he takes particular Cognisance of the *good* and *ill* Use which we make of our *natural* *Freedom*.

VII. That he will certainly *reward* or *punish* us *accordingly*.

I. To oblige us to be truly religious, it is necessary we should believe that the great *End* of God's Governing us is our *Welfare* and *Happiness*. That being infinitely *raised* above all *Want* and *Indigence*, he doth not *assume* the Government of us to *advance* himself, or to *gratify* any boundless *Ambition* of his own, which is a Vice that springs out of *Poverty* and *Indigence*, and therefore can have neither *Root* nor *Room* in a nature so infinitely happy as *his*; but that all *his* Design in *reigning* over us 'tis to do us good and to *consummate* our *Happiness*; to *restore* and *rectify* our disordered Nature, and to *advance* and *raise* it to the utmost
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Perfection, and Bliss and Glory it is capable of; to protect and defend us against present Evils, and support us under them, and convert them into Instruments of Good, and to rescue us from that worst of Evils, Sin, and from all those endless Miseries it is pregnant with. This we ought to believe is the great Scope of all his Acts of Government, and even of the direct Punishments he inflicts; which are always intended either to reclaim the Offenders themselves, or to warn others by the sad Example of their suffering not to follow the ill Example of their Sin. And that this is the great End of his Government he himself hath expressly declared. So Psalm 135. 9. we are assured that the Lord is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works; and Verse 13, 14. that in the Exercise of his everlasting Kingdom, he upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all that are bowed down; and tho in the Administration of his Government, he hath decreed to cut off all such obstinate Rebels as will not be reduced by the Methods of his Love, yet he hath declared that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance, 2 Pet. 3. 9. and that he would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the Truth, 1 Tim. 2. 4. And unless we believe him to be a benevolent Governour, that aims at the Good of his Subjects, we shall look upon his Government as a cruel Tyranny, erected for no other End but to squeeze and oppress us, to intral our Liberty, and rob us of the Rights of our Nature, and to chain us down to an endless and careless Toil and Wretchedness; and whilst we thus look upon it, it is impossible we should ever
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submit to it with that generous *Freedom* and *Chearfulness* that true Religion requires. But if we firmly believe that the great Design of it is to promote our *Welfare* both *here* and *hereafter*, we have all the reason in the World to *covet* to be Governed by God, and to receive his *Tok*e as a mighty *Grace* and *Favour*.

II. To oblige us to be truly religious it is also necessary we should believe that God hath given us *Laws* for the *Regulation* and *Government* of our *Actions*. For without *Laws* to direct Men what to *do* and what to *avoid*, there can be no such thing as *Government*, the proper business of which is to *regulate* Mens *Actions*, and without a *Rule* there can be no *Regulation*; so that Divine *Rules* or *Laws* are necessarily included in the Divine *Rule* or *Government*; and as God cannot be supposed to give *Laws* without *Governing*, so neither can he be supposed to *Govern* without giving *Laws*; so that unless we believe that God governs us by *Laws*, we are utterly destitute both of all reason *why*, and of all Direction *wherein* to obey him, and have neither *Motive* to *inforce*, nor *Measure* to *regulate* our Obedience. And as it is necessary we should believe that he hath given us *Laws*, so it is also necessary we should believe that those *Laws* are for our *good*; that he neither imposed them on us *pro imperio*, as arbitrary *Tests* and *Trials* of our Obedience, nor *exacts* them of us to serve *himself* and advance his own *Interest* and *Greatness*, but that the great Design of them is to do us good, and to direct our *Actions* to our own *Interest*; to render our *Lives* *placid* and *easie*, and to perfect and glorifie our *Natures*. For while we

look upon the *Matter* of God's Law either as *indifferent* in itself, and imposed upon us by him for no other End but to shew his *absolute* Sovereignty over us, or as *beneficial* only to him, and imposed upon us meerly to promote his *Interest*, it is impossible we should ever comply with it with a free and *chearful* Mind. We may haply obey him out of *Fear* and *Dread*, because he is too *mighty* for us, and not to be *contended* with, without infinite *Peril* and *Disadvantage*; but 'tis impossible we should obey those Laws with a *resigned* and *chearful* Will, from which we only fear ill, but expect no *benefit*. Wherefore to oblige us to render a free and *unforced* Submission to God's Laws, it is *absolutely* necessary we should *believe* that the great Design of them is the good of *those* they are imposed on; and so the Psalmist assures us that the *Statutes* of the Lord are perfect, converting the Soul, and making wise the simple; right, rejoicing the Heart; pure, enlightning the Eyes, true and righteous altogether, more to be desired than Gold, yea than much fine Gold, sweeter also than the Honey and the Honey comb, and that in keeping them there is great Reward, Psalm 19. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. and that the Law of God's mouth was better to him, that is, for the good it did him, than thousands of Gold and Silver, Psalm 119. 72.

And this if we firmly believe it will infinitely encourage our Obedience. For when I am sure that God commands me *nothing* but what my own *Health* and *Ease* and *Happiness* require, and that every Law of his is both a *necessary* and a *Sovereign* Prescription against the *Diseases* of my Nature, and that he could not have prescribed me *less* than
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he hath without being *defective* in his Care of my *Recovery* and *Happiness*, with what *Prudence* or *Modesty* can I *grudge* to *obey* him? How can I *think much* to *serve* him, when I *serve* my *self* by it to the best Purpose in the World? Or why should I so much as *wish* that he had not imposed *this* or *that* Law on me, when I know he imposed it to no other End but to *oblige* me to be *happy*, and that he cannot *Dispense* with any Duty he *requires* of me, without giving me *leave* to be *miserable*. When therefore God's *Authority* doth thus *strike in* with our *Interest*, and walk *hand in hand* with it through every Duty it *imposes*, by *refusing* to *obey* him, we *fight* against our *selves*, and renounce his *Authority* and our own *Happiness* together.

III. To *oblige* us to be *truly religious*, it is also necessary we should believe that to *secure* our *Obedience* to these *Laws*, God hath *derived* his own *Authority* upon all lawful *sovereign Powers*, to *govern* us according to *them*. That to *promote* our *Happiness* which is the end of his *Government*, and to *secure* our *Obedience* to his *Laws*, which are the *Means* to that *End*, he hath established a *visible Authority* upon *Earth*, to represent his own *invisible Majesty*, and in his Name to *exact* our *Obedience* to his *Laws*, so far as it is liable to *their Cognisance*; and that the Persons vested with *this Authority*, are *exalted* by it above all *Contrôle* or *Resistance*, and in their several *Dominions* placed *next* to and immediately *under* God, by *whose Commission* alone they *act*, and to *whose Tribunal* alone they are *accountable*: so that by *resisting* *them*, we do as much *resist* God, whose *Deputy Governours* they are, as a *Neapolitan* doth the King of *Spain*,

Spain, by *levying Arms* against his *Vice-Roy* of *Naples*; and by *refusing* to obey their *just* and *lawful* Commands we *demur* to *God's* Authority, who in every *just* thing they *impose* or *require*, *speaks* to us by their *Mouths*, and *commands* us by their *Laws*. For so the *Scripture* tells us not only that they are *ordained* of *God*, and that to *resist* them is to *resist* the *Ordinance* of *God*; not only that they are the *Ministers* of *God*, and that therefore for *Conscience* sake, or in *Reverence* to *God's* Authority which they bear, they are to be *obeyed*, *Rom.* 13. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, but that they *judge* for *God* and not for *Men*, 2 *Chron.* 19. 6. and that therefore their *Judgment* is *God's*, *Deut.* 1. 17.

The *Disbelief* of which excludes *God's* Government out of the *World*, and consequently *dissolves* all our *Obligations* of *Duty* and *Allegiance* to him. For how can he be *Supreme Governour* of the *World*, if all other *Governments* are not *immediately* under him? And how can they be *immediately* under him, if they are not *immediately* *authorized* by him? And by what other *Right* can any *Person* or *Persons* pretend to *Govern* in *God's* Kingdom under him, but by *Commission* from him? For every *Supreme Authority* is the *Head* and *Fountain* of all other *Authorities*, so far as it *extends*; and if it be not so, it cannot be *Supreme*. And therefore unless all *Authority* be *derived* from *God*, he can have no such thing as a *Supreme Authority* in the *World*. And this I doubt not is very well understood by our *Atheistical Politicians*, who in *pursuance* of their *Denial* of *God*, derive all *Authority* from the *People*; being truly aware that if the *Authority* of the *Governours* can be

be derived from the *People*, it will necessarily follow that *both* must be *independent* upon *God*, and that to derive *Authority* to govern from any other *Head* but *God*, is to deny him to be the *supreme Governour* of the *World*, which is the thing they would be at. If it be said, that *God* hath given *Authority* to the *People* to authorise their *Governours*, and so he is still *Head* of all *Authority*, tho it be derived from him *immediately* through the *People*; I answer, That *this* doth very little mend the matter. For if *God* hath given *Authority* to the *People* to authorise their *Governours*, he hath in Effect given the *Reins* out of his own *Hands*, and left the *People* to govern the *World*. For I would fain know, do *Governours* govern by *God's* *Authority*, or the *Peoples*? If by the *Peoples*, 'tis the *People* that govern by them and not *God*; if by *God's*, 'tis *God* that governs by them and not the *People*. In short, if they govern by the *Peoples* *Authority*, they are, as *Governours*, at least, *independent* from *God*, and *accountable* only to the *Tribunal* of the *People*; if by *God's* *Authority*, they are *Independent* from the *People*, and *accountable* only to the *Tribunal* of *God*. So that whether he *authorises* them *immediately* or by the *People* it is all one, the *Question* being not so much *how* they are *authorised*, as by *what* *Authority* they govern; if it be by *God's*, to *God* alone they are *accountable*; if by the *People*, *God's* *Authority* is quite *excluded* from having any hand in the *Government* of the *World*. In short, If the *Choice* of the *People* makes their *Governour* without *God's* *authorising* him, he is the *Peoples* *Vice-roy*, and not *God's*; but if it be *God* that *authorises* him, he is

God's Viceroy and not the Peoples. So that their choice even in *Elective Governments* can signifie no more than the bare presenting of a Person to God to be authorized his Vicegerent by him: who, if their Choice be just and lawful, is supposed to consent and to approve it, and thereby to authorize the Person so presented. For *sovereign Authority* in the *Abstract* is ordained and instituted by God; but *abstract Authority* cannot govern unless some Person be vested with it; and to vest him with it, he must not only be applied to the *Authority*, but the *Authority* must also be applied to him; but where the People have the *Right of Election*, they only apply the Person to the *Authority*, but 'tis God's Consent and Approbation that applies the *Authority* to the Person, who thereupon commences *Supreme* under God, and hath no *superiour Tribunal* but God's to account to.

And thus according to the Prophet *Daniel*, the most high rules in the Kingdoms of Men, because as Lord of all the Lords, and King of all the Kings of the Earth, he rules and governs by their Ministry, and they rule and govern by his Authority. So that to secure and maintain the Obligations which God's Government of the World devolves upon us, it is necessary we should believe that all rightful Sovereigns are his Vicegerents, and do rule by his Commission and Authority, and that the Sword which they bear is God's, who hath delivered it into their Hands, to protect his faithful Subjects, and to execute his Wrath, and to avenge his Authority upon Evil doers. So that we cannot rebel against them, nor wilfully disobey their just Commands, without giving a Defiance to God

him

himself, and rejecting the Yoke of his Government. Whilst therefore we behave our selves *Factionally* and *Seditionally* towards those whom God hath set over us, we live as *Out-laws* in the Kingdom of God, without any respect to that *visible Authority* by which he governs the *World*; and whilst we do so, all our *Pretences to Religion* are *impudent Lyes* and *Impostures*.

IV. In order to our being *truly Religious* it is also *necessary* we should believe that God is ready to contribute to us all that *Assistance* which is *necessary* to enable us to observe his Laws. That whereas in this *corrupt State* of our *Nature*, we are so *indisposed* to all good by our *carnal Affections* and *vicious Habits*, as that without some *foreign Aid* it is *morally certain* we shall never be reduced to a through *Compliance* with our *Duty*. God is *always* ready not only to *second* but to *prevent* our Endeavours, to *inspire* good Thoughts into our *Minds*, and by them to *kindle* devout Affections in our *Wills*, and by them to *excite* us to a *constant Course* of *pious* and *virtuous Endeavours*; and that when he hath proceeded *thus far* with us, he doth not presently *abandon* us to our selves, and leave us to *contend* and *struggle* in vain with *inseparable Difficulties*, but all along *co-operate* with us, *aids* and *assists* our Faculties, and with his *holy Inspirations* cherishes our *languishing Endeavours*, till they have wrought their way through all the *Difficulties* of Religion into a *permanent State* of *Piety* and *Virtue*. So that unless we either turn a *deaf Ear* to those good Thoughts he *suggests* to us, and refuse to *listen* to their *Perswasions*, or *quench* those *holy Affections* which

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they kindle in us with *earthly* Cares and Pleasures, or by wilful sinning *harden* our Heart against all the Impressions of his Grace, we shall not fail of being frequently and powerfully excited by him to *Piety* and *Virtue*; and when he thus excites us, if we do not wilfully *slacken* our Endeavours, and basely surrender back our selves to our *Lusts*, in despite of all our Resolutions and his Persuasions to the contrary, we shall be so effectually and constantly assisted by him, as that it will be impossible for us to fail of Success. For thus the Scripture assures us that he gives Grace to the humble, 1 Pet. 5. 5. and thereby works in them to will and to do, Phil. 2. 13. and that to this End he gives his holy Spirit to every one that asks. Luke 11. 13. The Belief of which is absolutely necessary to oblige us to submit to Religion. For tho we are naturally free to Good as well as Evil, yet through the vicious Habits we have generally contracted either through youthful Levity and Inconsideration, or ill Education and Example, our Liberty to good is so straitned and confined, that whenever we attempt to exercise it, we find a prevailing Byass on our Natures, that carries us the contrary way, bearing before it all our good Resolutions, and tiring out our short-breath'd Endeavours, so that the good we would, we do not, and the evil we would not, we do. And therefore unless we can depend upon God for Assistance against the Violence and Outrage of our bad Inclinations, after we have once struggled with them in vain, and thereby made a woful Experiment of our own Impotence, we shall out of mere Despair of prevailing against them, give over attempting it, and utterly abandon our selves to their Tyranny.

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But if we firmly believe that God who knows our Weakness and our *Enemies* strength, will in Proportion to both readily assist us, whensoever we heartily invoke his Aid, and in Concurrence therewith exert our own *Endeavour*, we have all the Encouragement in the World to undertake our Duty, maugre all the *Difficulties* that attend it. For being assured that God will concur with our *Endeavours*, we may depend upon it; that not only our own *Endeavours* are in our Power, but God's Assistance too, and that the *Corruptions* of our Nature do not so much over-match our *Endeavours*, as God's Assistance over matches those *Corruptions*. So that if we heartily exert our *Endeavour*, we are sure we cannot fail of *Success*, because we know that God will assist our *Endeavour*, and that with his Assistance we cannot but be *victorious*. Since therefore the *Grace* of God is as much under the Command of our Will as our own *Principles* of Action, it is as much in our Power to do that which we cannot do without God's Grace, as to do that which we can. And therefore if God's Grace be sufficient to supply the Defect of our natural Power, and enable us to Conquer the *Difficulties* of our Duty, we are sure there is nothing in it can be too hard for us; because now we can do not only all that we can do by our selves, but also all that we can do by the Grace of God.

V. To oblige us to be truly Religious it is also necessary we should believe that the Assistance which God affords us, is such as supposes us free Agents, and concurs with and maintains our natural Freedom. That it doth not necessarily determine us to good, but leaves it to our own free Choice

to determine our selves which way we please; that as he acts upon *necessary* Agents by a *necessary* Influx and Causality which they cannot resist, and determine those things to act by his Will, which have no Will of their own to determine them, so he acts upon *free* Agents by a *free* and *unconstraining* Influence, i. e. by *suggesting* Arguments to their *Minds*, to *incline* and *perswade* them, but leaves it to their own *Liberty* to consider those Arguments are not, and to comply with those *Perswasions* or reject them; and that tho as he hath sometimes *suspended* the Powers of *necessary* Agents, and *interrupted* the *natural* Course of their *Motion*, as when he forbad the *Sun* to move, and the *Fire* to burn, so he hath at other times *restrained* the *natural* Liberty of *free* Agents, and *determined* them by an *over-ruling* Necessity, yet both the one and the other are *extraordinary* and *miraculous*: but that in the *ordinary* Course of his Government, he doth as well leave *free* Agents to that *natural* freedom with which he first created them, as *necessary* ones to those *Necessities* which he first *impressed* upon their Natures. For his *Providence* is *succedaneous* to his *Creation*, and did at first begin where that ended, and doth still proceed as it began, ordering and governing all things according to the several *Frames* and *Models* in which he first cast and created them. Nor can he order and govern them *otherwise* without unravelling his own *Creation*, and making things to be otherwise than he first made them. For how can he ordinarily *necessitate* those Agents whom he first made *free*, without changing their *Natures* from *free* to *necessary*, and making them a different kind of Being

Being than he made them? So that tho in the Course of his Government God doth powerfully importune and persuade us, yet he lays no *Necessity* upon our *Wills*, but leaves us free to chuse or refuse; and as the *Temptations* of *Sin* incline us one way, so the *Grace* of God inclines us another, but *both* leave us to our own Liberty to go which way we please. And this the Scripture plainly asserts, where it makes mention of Mens *resisting the Holy Ghost*, Acts 7. 51. and *grieving and quenching the Spirit of God*, Ephes. 4. 30. 1 Thes. 5. 19. and *refusing to hear when God calls, and to regard when he stretches forth his Hand*, and of their *setting his Counsel at nought, and rejecting his Re-proofs*, Prov. 1. 24, 25. and in a word, where it makes mention of some Mens baffling and defeating that very Grace which would have conquered and perswaded others, *Matth. 11. 21.* Which plainly imply that all that Assistance to do our Duty, that God ordinarily vouchsafes us in the Course of his Government, is such as no way determines or necessitates us.

The Belief of which is highly necessary to engage us in the *Service* of Religion. For while Men imagine that their Duty is *such* as they cannot heartily comply with, without being compelled to it by an *irresistible Grace*, and that no Assistance of God can be sufficient to *this* End, but that which suspends their Liberty to *Evil*, and fatally determines them to *Good*, what should move them to exert their own Endeavour? Why should they watch and pray, and strive and contend against a corrupt Nature? For if God will make them good *irresistibly*, their Endeavour is *needless*; but if he

will not, it is *Labour in vain*. To what End should they ply the *Oar* to stem the *Tide* of a *degenerate* Nature, since without an *irresistible Gale* from Heaven they shall never *succeed*, and with it they shall whether they ply or no? So that while Men live in Expectance of an *irresistible Grace* to make them *good*, they quit themselves of all their *Obligations* to a pious and virtuous *Endeavour*; but so long as they believe that God's *Grace* is such as supposes and leaves them *free*, such as they may defeat or prosper by the *good* or *ill* use of their Liberty, they cannot but discern themselves infinitely obliged to *co-operate* with it, to listen and consent to its blessed *Motions* and *Perswasions*, and constantly to endeavour to *comply* with them in their *Actions*, or at least not to *resist* them, and *harden* and *fortifie* themselves against them, by acting counter to and flying in the face of their own *Convictions*. For since the *Grace of God* doth not determine us to *good*, but leaves us to our own Freedom, we can never expect to be determined to good without our free *concurrence*; which if we *refuse* we shall certainly perish in our *Sin*, and have not only the *Blood* of our own *Souls* to answer for, but all that *Grace* too which we have baffled and defeated.

VI. To oblige us to be *truly Religious* it is necessary that we should believe that God takes particular Cognisance of the *good* and *ill* Use we make of our *natural Freedom*; that he doth not merely gaze upon our *Actions* as an indifferent and unconcerned Spectator, but beholds them with the highest Concern and Regard, with infinite Complacency or Detestation, and treasures them up

in his all-comprehending Mind, to be produced *for or against* us in the day of fearful *Reckonings* and *Accounts*; that he doth not *inspect* our Actions with a *passant* and *curfory* View, as things of little or no Moment, but lays them up in *everlasting* Remembrance, so that every *good* or *ill* thing we do, stands upon *Record* in the *Mind* of God in order to our final *Acquittal* or *Condemnation*. For so the Scripture tells us, not only that *God's Eyes* are upon the ways of *Man*, and that he seeth all his goings, Job 34. 21. and that his *Eyes* run to and fro throughout the *Earth*, and are in every *Place* beholding the *good* and *evil*, 2 Chron. 16. 9. and Prov. 15. 3. but that he sees good Actions tho done in *secret*, and will reward them openly, Matth. 6. 6. and that he will bring every work into *Judgment* with every *secret* thing whether it be *good* or *evil*, Eccles. 12. 24.

The Belief of which is absolutely necessary to found the *Obligations* of Religion. For if we suppose either that God sees not our Actions, or looks upon them with an *indifferent* Eye, without taking any *Notice* or *Cognisance* of them, there is no *religious Consideration* to oblige us. For upon this Supposal, our Actions must all be *indifferent* to him; and if they are *indifferent* to him, what reason have we to make any *difference* between them? 'Tis true, *good* Actions are in themselves *beneficial*, and *evil* ones *prejudicial* to us, and therefore for our own *Interest*-sake we ought to choose the *one* and refuse the *other*; but this *abstracted* from all *Respects* to God, is only a *Prudential* and not a *religious Obligation*; but why should we do any *good* or avoid any *evil* upon God's account, if *good* and

and *Evil* are alike to him? But if we firmly believe that God not only *sees* whatsoever we *do*, but takes particular Notice of all our *good* and *evil* Actions, and out of an *high* Complacency in the *one* and Abhorrence of the *other* treasures up *both* in *everlasting* Remembrance, we cannot but discern our selves *obliged* by all the *Reason* in the *World* to *chuse* what is *good*, and *eschew* what is *evil*. For what an infinite Encouragement is it to do *good*, to consider that while we are doing it, God's *Eye* is upon us, *regarding* us with high *Applause* and *Approbation*, and entring it with all its acceptable Circumstances into the eternal *Record* of his own Mind, from whence it shall be *produced* in the last *Day*, and *proclaimed* before *Men* and *Angels* to our everlasting *Honour* and *Glory*? So that when our *Memory* is lost upon Earth, and all that we did is swallowed up in the deep Abyss of *Oblivion*, our *Pieties* and *Virtues* shall be *famed* in the *Records* of *Heaven*, and have *everlasting* *Memorials* in the Mind of God. As on the contrary, what an infinite *Discouragement* is it from *sinning*, to consider that the *Eye* of that God to whom *Vengeance* belongs is intent upon us, following us through all our *Retreats* and *Concealments*, and *Recording* every *ill* Deed and all its *foul* Aggravations in the eternal *Volumes* of his own *Remembrance*, which he will *one* *Day* most certainly open and read out before all the *World* to our everlasting *Shame* and *Confusion*? So that when the *pleasure* of our *Sin* is gone, and all that rendered it *tempting* or *desirable*, for ever *vanish* and *forgotten*, the *Shame* and *Infamy* of it shall stand upon *Record*, and be transmitted down to *eternal* Ages.

VII. And lastly, To oblige us to be *truly religious* it is also *necessary* we should believe that God will *reward* and *punish* us according to our *doings*; that he is neither an *idle* nor an *impotent* Spectator of our Actions, that *meerly pleases* and *vexes* himself with the Contemplation of them; but that all the Notice he takes of them is in order to his *rewarding* and *punishing* them, which he will one day most certainly do to our everlasting Joy or Confusion. But because this Argument will be the Subject of the ensuing Chapter, I shall insist no farther on it.

S E C T. II.

Of the Proofs and Evidences which there are to create in us a Belief of the Divine Providence.

HAVING in the foregoing Section given an account of those *Parts* and *Branches* of the *Divine Providence*, which are *necessary* to be *believed* in order to the *founding* the *Obligation* of *Religion*; I shall proceed in the next place, to shew what *Evidences* there are to create this *Belief* in us; and because this is the great *Fundamental* of all *Religion*, upon the *Belief* of which it all *immediately* depends, I shall endeavour to *demonstrate* the *Truth* of it.

I. *A priori*, by Arguments drawn from God himself.

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II. *A posteriori*, by Argument drawn from *sensible Effects* of God in the World.

I. I shall endeavour to assert the *Truth* of a *Divine Providence* by Arguments drawn from *God himself*. For supposing that there is a *God*, that is to say, an infinitely *wise*, and *good* and *powerful* Cause of all things, (which I doubt not to make appear when I come to discourse of the *sensible Effects* of God in the World) it will from thence necessarily follow that he *upholds*, *disposes* and *governs* all things by an over-ruling *Providence*; For,

I. If there be such a *God*, he must necessarily *be* and *exist* of *himself*, without any dependence upon any *superiour Cause*.

II. He must necessarily be the *Cause* of all other things that *are* and *do exist*.

III. He must necessarily be *present with* all things.

IV. Whereever he is, so *active* are his *Perfections* that he cannot but *operate* wheresoever he finds *Objects* to work upon. From all which I shall make appear it will necessarily follow, that he continually *exercises* an over-ruling *Providence* over the World.

I. If there be a *God*, he must necessarily *exist* or *be* of *himself* without *Dependence* on any *superiour Cause*. For when we speak of *God*, we mean by him a Being that is *as perfect* as it is possible, that hath nothing *before* him, nothing *superiour* to him, nothing *greater* than himself; which cannot be meant of any *derived Being*; because

because all Effects are *after* their Causes, and in some respect *inferiour* to them, as *deriving* their Beings, and all their Excellencies and Perfections *from* them. But to say of God, that he is *after* or any way *inferiour* to any Cause, is a palpable *Contradiction* to the very *Notion* of him; 'tis to say that there is something *before* the *eternal* Something, *superiour* to the *Supreme* Something, more *perfect* than *infinite* Perfection. So that either there *can* be no such Being as a God in the World, or he must be *of himself* or *from his own* Essence, in which there must be such an infinite *Fulness* of *Being*, as that from all Eternity *past* to all Eternity *to come* it is *infinitely* removed from *not Being*, and so by Necessity of Nature must *from* ever *have been* and *for ever be*. And *such* a Being we must admit of whether we will admit of a God or no; for either we must allow that *this World*, or at least the *Matter* of it exists of *itself* by its own *never-failing* Fulness of Being, without ever needing any *Cause* to *produce* it, (which as I shall shew you by and by is *impossible*) or that all things in it *derive* their Being from some *first Cause*, who having *no* Cause in being *before* him must necessarily be *uncaused* and *unproduced*; and if God exists *of himself*, as he *must* do supposing he *is*, he must be *superiour* to all things; for that which is of *itself* cannot but *be*, and that which cannot but *be* can have no Power above it, because if it *hath*, that Power might have either *hindred* or *extinguished* its Being, and so it might *not* have *been*.

So that God's *Self-existence* necessarily supposes him exalted *above* all Power and Superiority, *and*

and consequently to be the *supreme and sovereign Power over all things*; but to suppose him to be *supreme and Sovereign without exercising Rule and Dominion*, is *ridiculous*; for without the Exercise of Dominion supreme Power is but an *useless and insignificant Cypher-flourish with a glorious Name*, Rule and Dominion being the only proper Sphere for *supreme Power* as such, to *move and act* in. So that unless God *Rules and Governs*, he is *supreme to no Purpose*, and his *sovereign Power* is *useless and in vain*, for if he exert his *sovereign Power at all*, it must be in *Rule and Dominion*, which is its only natural *Province*; but if he doth *not*, his *Sovereignty* is only a *Majestick Sloth* that sits *sleeping* in an *awful Throne* with its *Hands* in its *Bosom*, without ever doing any thing that is *Sovereign*; and of what *Use* is that *sovereign Power* that never exercises any *act* of *Sovereignty*? Since therefore God's *Self-Existence* necessarily *supposes* his *sovereign Power over all things*, we must either grant that he continually *exercises* this *Power* in ruling and governing the *World*, or assert that it is utterly *useless and in vain*, which, as I shall shew by and by, is as *absurd* as it is *blasphemous*.

II. If there be a God he must necessarily be the *Cause* of all other things that *are* and do *exist*. For whatsoever might *not* have been, or may *not* be, must be derived from something which cannot *but be*. If it might not have been, how came it to *be*? Not from *it self* to be sure, for then it must *always* have necessarily *been*; and therefore it must finally be resolved into some other *Cause* which is of *it self*, and so cannot but *always have been*.

been and always *be*. Now that this World is not of *itself*, but from some *other* Cause that is of *itself*, is evident; because whatsoever is of *itself*, must necessarily have all the *Being*, and all the *Perfection* of Being that is *possible*. For that which is of *itself* is *necessarily* of itself, and it is not only true that it *cannot but be*, but also that it *cannot but be of itself*; for if it might not have been of *itself*, it might not have been at all, because *itself* or its own *Essence* is the only *Ground* or *Reason* of its Being; and therefore if that *Reason* might have *failed* it might *never* have been at all. Now that which *necessarily* is of *itself*, hath neither *actual* nor *possible* Cause of Being; for if it hath an *actual* Cause, it is not of *itself*; if any *possible* one, it is not *necessarily* of itself; and if it hath no *possible* Cause of Being, it is *all* that it's *possible* to be, that is, it is so *compleat* and *perfect*, that no *possible* *Being* or *Perfection* of Being can be *added* to it.

Besides, that which is of *itself* includes *Necessity* of Being in its *Essence*, and that which includes necessity of Being, must always *actually* be what it is, and have nothing *potential* in its Nature; and that which hath nothing *potential* must have all *possible* Being and *Perfection*. For if there be any *possible* *Perfection* of Being which it hath not, it must be in *possibility* of being what it is not, and if so, it is not *necessarily* what it is. So that if the World be of *itself*, it must include in the Nature of it a *Necessity* of Being; and if so, it must always *actually* be, that is, be always out of all *Possibility* either of *not being* or of being *what it is not*; and if it be out of all *Possibility* of
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not Being, it must have all Possible *Being* ; if out of all Possibility of being what it is not, it must have all possible *Perfection of Being* ; that is, all possible *Power* and *Knowledge* and *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, which do all as necessarily result from *Selſ-being* as any *essential Property* from any *Essence*. Since therefore this material World hath none of these possible *Perfections* of Being in it, it is impossible it should be of *itself*, and if it be not of itself, it must have a *Cause* of Being that is distinct from and before itself ; and what can the Cause be but *God* ; since that which *caused* the World must be before all Causes, and that which is before all Causes must be *uncaused* and of *itself*, and that which is of itself must have *all possible Perfection*, and consequently be *God*.

Since therefore the World was *made* by *God*, it will from hence necessarily follow that it is *ruled* and *governed* by him. For if he made the World, to be sure he made it for *some End*, it being unconceivable that infinite *Wisdom* should frame a World that is capable of the most *noble* and *excellent* Ends, without *designing* it to *any* End at all ; and if he deligned it for any End, to be sure he is *concerned* that *that* End whatever it be should be *accomplished* ; and if he be, his own Concernment will lead him to the *Exercise* of a *Providence*, which is nothing else but a *constant* and *steddy* Guidance of those Beings which he hath made, to those *common* and *particular* Ends for which he made them. For if he made them for *any* End, to be sure *whatever* it was, he did not let it *drop out* of his *Mind* and *Thoughts* as soon as he had made them, but still carries it a-
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long in his *Eye* and *Intention*; and if he still *intends* that End, there is no doubt but he still *prosecutes* it, which he cannot do without a *Providence*; for how can he *drive* things on to the *Ends* for which he *made* them, if he be withdrawn from the *World*, and hath wholly sequestred himself from all the *Affairs* of it.

III. If there be a *God*, he must necessarily be *present* with all things; because being of *himself* without any Cause, he must be without any *Bounds* or *Limits* of Being. For it is altogether unconceivable how any thing that is of itself should be *restrained* or *limited* by itself. For tho we must allow something to be of *itself* whether we will admit of a *God*, or no, yet we cannot suppose that which is of *itself* to be the *Cause* of itself, without a *Contradiction*; because every *Cause* must be *before* its *Effect*; and therefore to suppose that which is of itself, to be the *Cause* of itself, is to suppose it to be *before* itself, that is, to be when it is *not*, or to be and *not* be together, which is *impossible*. When therefore we say that *something* is of *itself*, our meaning can be no other than *this*, that it hath such an *immense Plenitude* of Being in itself as that it neither *needed* nor *required* any *Cause* to produce it; and how can that which is of itself without being the *Cause* of itself be any way *restrained* or *limited* by itself? For that which *limits* Beings, is only the *Will* or *Power* of their *Causes*, which either *would* not or *could* not bestow any further *Being* or *Perfection* upon them; and therefore only such things as are *caused* are *limited*, because they being produced out of *nothing*, are only so far and no farther

ther brought into Being, as their Cause was *willing* or *able* to bring them. That therefore which exists of *itself* without any Cause of Being, must exist of itself without any Limits of Being; because it was neither limited by *itself*, nor by any other Cause; and that which hath nothing to limit it, must necessarily be *immense* and *boundless*. God therefore being this *Self existing Being*, must necessarily be of an *unlimited Essence*; an Essence which no possible Space can either *circumscribe* or *define*, but must necessarily be *diffused* all *through*, *circumsufed* all *about*, and *present* with all things.

And if he be *present* with all things, how is it imaginable he should *sit still* among them, and exercise no *Providence* over them? For since he is a *living Being*, he must be *vitally* present where-soever he *is*, and that he should be *vitally* and yet *unactively* present among a *World of Beings*, that he should live in this wide *University* of things, and in every *Part* of it, and yet take no more *Notice* of, have no more *Influence* upon it than if he were a *dead* and *senseless* Idol, is altogether *inconceivable*; and we may as well imagine a *Sun* in the Universe without *Heat* or *Light*, as a *living God* *surrounding* and *penetrating* all things without ever *exerting* his *active Powers*, or *shedding forth* his *vital Influence* upon them. For where-ever *life* is, it will *operate*; and therefore since God who is all *Life* and *Activity* is every where, he must *operate* every where, and if he *operate* every where, that *Operation* is an *Universal Providence*.

IV. And lastly, If there be a God, he must be endowed with all those *active Perfections* of *Power* and

and *Wisdom*, *Justice* and *Goodness*; all which must be present wheresoever he is. For as for *Power*, it is nothing else but the *Spring* or *Fountain* of *Causality*; and therefore since God is the first Cause, he must necessarily be the *Spring* of the *Power* of all *Causes*, and that from which all *Power* is derived must itself be all powerful; otherwise it will derive more *Power* than it hath; and be the Cause of that whereof it hath no *Causality*, which is a *Contradiction*. And then as for *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, they are inseparable to perfect *Power*; which how forcible soever it be, cannot be perfect except it be conducted by *Wisdom* and *Goodness*; for without these, *Power* is only an irresistible *Whirlwind* that sweeps and hurries all things before it without any *End*, or *Method*, or *Order*. And what a lame, blind and defective *Power* must that be that can neither design nor contrive, neither propose to itself beneficial *Ends*, nor yet choose suitable *Means* to effect them? and in a word, that can neither intend well nor prosecute wisely? If therefore the *Power* of God be perfect, as it cannot but be, being the Original of all *Power*, it must necessarily be conjoyn'd with perfect *Wisdom* and *Goodness*; with perfect *Goodness* to level its Intentions at good and beneficial *Ends*; with perfect *Wisdom* to order and direct its Prosecutions.

Since therefore perfect *Power*, and *Wisdom* and *Goodness* are essential to God, they must be co-extended with his *Essence*, which as I shewed before is extended to all things. And how can we conceive such active Perfections as these to be present with all things without ever acting upon them?

For the very *End* and *Perfection* of all these Attributes consists in their *Exercise*; for so the End of *Power* is *Action*, the End of *Wisdom* is *ordering* and *contriving*, and the End of *Goodness* is *doing good*. How then can we suppose that an infinite *Power*, whose End is *Action*, should be present where a World of things are to be *done*, and *do nothing*? that infinite *Wisdom* whose End is *ordering* and *contriving*, should be present where a World of things are to be *ordered*, and *order nothing*? Or that infinite *Goodness*, whose End is *doing good*, should be present where a World of good is to be *done*, and *do none at all*? What is this but to transform the Divine *Perfections* into senseless *Idols*, that have *Eyes*, but *see not*, *Hands*, but *act not*; that have *boundless*, but *useless* and *inactive* Powers; that have *Glorious Names*, but in reality stand but for so many *Cyphers* in the World? And thus I have endeavoured to *demonstrate* a *Providence* by Arguments drawn from *God* himself; but because there may be something in them too *subtile* and *Metaphysical* for common Apprehensions to reach, I have but briefly insisted on them. I proceed therefore in the second place to another sort of Arguments, which are more easie and obvious, viz. such as are drawn from *sensible Effects*, of which I shall give these six Instances.

I. The constant *Direction* of things to the same *good Ends*, which have no *Design* in themselves.

II. The watchful *Providence* of things which have no *Foresight* in themselves.

III. The

III. The mutual *Agreement* and *Correspondency* of things which have no *Understanding* of themselves or of one another.

IV. The *Continuation* of things in the same comely *Order*, which have no *Government* of themselves.

V. *Miraculous* Events.

VI. *Predictions* of *future* and *remote* *Contingencies*.

I. One sensible instance of a *Divine Providence* is the constant *Direction* of things to the same good *Ends* which have no *Design* in themselves. When we see things void of all *Sense* and *Reason* as constantly directed to good *Ends*, as they could be if they had *Sense* and *Reason*, we may be sure that there is a *Reason* without them that framed them for those *Ends*, and directs them to them; it being unconceivable how *Chance* or blind *Necessity* that have no *Design*, or *Art*, or *Contrivance* in them, should constantly operate as regularly as *Reason* itself. Now if we survey this vast *Universality* of things, we may easily observe, at least of the *generality* of them, that they are framed for and directed to some *Wise* and *excellent* *End*; and tho through our own *short-sightedness* or want of *Enquiry* we do not see the *Use* and *Tendency* of them all, yet this is no Argument at all that they are *vain* and *superfluous*. For as we now see the *Use* of a world of things, which *past* *Generations* understand not, so there is no doubt but *future* *Generations* will understand the *Use* of a *World* more than we; and therefore since the *Usefulness* of the *Generality* of things

things is now so *apparent* and *visible*, we ought in all Reason to conclude, that *our* not discerning the *Usefulness* of them *all*, proceeds not from *their* Defect, and from *our own* Ignorance.

Let us therefore briefly survey this *beautiful* Scene of things that is *before* us. The *Sun* and *Earth*, for Instance, are things that are utterly void of *Understanding*, and therefore can have no *Design* or *Contrivance* in them; how then came they to *place* and *continue* themselves at such a *commodious* Distance from one another; Whereas in such a *vast* and *immense* Space they might have found ten thousand Millions of *other* Places and Distances to *fix* in? The *Earth* might have found room enough to place itself either much *nearer* to, or much *remoter* from the *Sun* than it *is*; but if it had done *so*, it must have either been everlastingly *parched* or everlastingly *frozen* and *benighted*, and either way *converted* into an *useless*, *barren* and *uninhabitable* Defart; whereas where it now is, it stands at the most *convenient* Distance from the *Sun*, to be *warmed* and *cherished* by his *enlivening* Fires, and neither to be *roasted* by being too *near* them, nor *frozen* by being too *far* from them; but to receive from them such a *temperate* heat, as is sufficient to *excite* its *seminal* Virtues, and to *draw up* its *Juices* into them, and thereby to *ripen* its natural *Fruits*, and in a word, to *comfort* and *refresh* its Inhabitants, and to tender it to them a *pleasant*, a *healthful*, and a *fruitful* Paradise. Since therefore of ten thousand Millions of Places wherein it *might* have fixed to that *Immensity* of Space that surrounds it, it hath *fixed upon*, and coth still *continue* in the *best* without any *Design*
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or *Wisdom* of its own, it is plain that there is an over-ruling *Wisdom* without it that *chose* its place, and *fixes* and *determines* it thereunto. Again, How came the *Sun* (for whether it be the *Earth* that moves about the *Sun*, or the *Sun* about the *Earth* is all one to our Enquiry) how came this *Sun*, I say, which hath no *Reason* to govern it self by, to be *determined* to such a *useful* Course of Motion? what makes this *vast* and *mighty* Body move round the *Earth* in twenty four hours, in finishing which *spacious* Circle of Motion it must fly far *swifter* than a Bullet from a Cannons Mouth; and yet through so many Ages each twenty four hours it hath *constantly* performed it, without being so much as one Minute *faster* or *slower*; whereby it makes those *just* and *regular* Returns of *Day* and *Night* to both the *Hemispheres*, so that neither the one nor the other is either too much heated by his Presence, or too long benighted by his Absence, because as soon as the one hath been sufficiently warmed and cherished with his Rays, he immediately retires from it into the other, and by so doing he gives the *active* Animals leave to rest, the over-heated Air to cool, and the Gasping Earth to repair its fainting Vertues, which a continued heat would soon exhaust and extinguish. Thus by returning *Day* and *Night* to both Parts of the Earth once in twenty four Hours, he preserves both their Heat and Moisture upon which all Generation depends, in a due and regular Temper, so that neither their radical Moisture is consumed by the parching droughts of the *Day*, nor their vital heat extinguished by the cool Moistures of the *Night*, but the one still allays and tempers the other by their quick and al-

ternate Revolutions. How then can the Sun that *understands* no utility, and *designs* no End, to be *determined* to this Course of Motion, which above all others is so admirably *useful* and *advantageous* to this World we live in? Again, What is the Reason that since he thus *equally* moves round the Earth, he doth not *always* move in the same Circle, but run out every Day into a different Circle almost a whole Degree farther *Northward* or *Southward*, and this so *constantly* and so *precisely* that in six thousand succeeding Revolutions, he hath never varied so much as *one* Minute from his Course either *one* way or the *other*, and by these his *stated* *Excurrences* towards the *North* and *South*, he makes the *Seasons* of the *Year*, gives a *Summer* and a *Winter*, a *Spring* and a *Fall* to all Parts of the Earth, without which the Earth would long ere this have been utterly *useless*, and all its *Fruits*, and for want of them its *Animals* too would have for ever *perished*? For some Parts of it would have been *scorched* with everlasting *Heat*, others *bound up* with everlasting *Frost*; here it would have been all a *Sandy*, there all an *Icy* Desert, and so both *Vegetation* and *Generation* would every where have utterly *ceast* either for want of *Moisture* or for want of *Heat*. How came the Sun then which hath neither *Sense* nor *Reason* of his own to *guide* him, to be *directed* into such a *commodious* Course of annual Motion, whenas in that vast space he moves in, he might as well have run ten thousand *other* Courses of Motion; he might have moved all the Year round the Earths *Equator*; but if he had done so, all the *middle* Tracts of Earth both *Northward* and *Southward* would soon have been
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scorched up with his continual Presence, and all the remoter Parts both ways would quickly have died with Cold through his perpetual Absence: or he might have run his annual Course on one side only of the Earths Equator; and made his circular Excursions to or beyond the Pole; but if he had done so, he must have left a great Part of the opposite Hemisphere exposed to everlasting Night and Cold, whereas in the annual Course of Motion he now performs, he sheds forth his Light, and Heat, and Influence over all the World, and by turns gives every Part its Yearly Seasons; which is a plain Evidence that all his Motions are conducted by a wise and over-ruling Mind, which among so many Courses of Motion that lie before him in the boundless Space he moves in, hath determined him to that which for Perpetuity is much the best and most commodious.

And the same is to be said of the Motions of the Moon, which Nature hath designed for a *vicarious* Light to the Sun, to supply his Absence, and perform his Office in this lower World. For what makes this *senseless* and *irrational* Planet, that moves without any *Intention* of its own, wander by turns *Northward* and *Southward* some Degrees beyond the Sun? And what makes it move *Northward* when the Sun is *Southward*, and again *Southward* when the Sun is *Northward*, whereas in that *immense* Space wherein it swims, it hath room enough to run a thousand other Courses of Motion, none of which could have been so *advantageous* to us as *this*? For by moving *Northward* when the Sun is *Southward*, and so *à contra*, it moderates the Cold and Darkeness of the Winter Nights, and
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by passing beyond the *Tropicks*, which are the Boundaries of the Sun, it in some measure supplies his *Absence*, by enlightning those *long* and *tedious* Nights in which the Regions towards the *Poles* are buried ; which is a plain Instance of the singular *Care* of *Providence*, that no Parts of the Earth should be left altogether *destitute* of the necessary Comforts of the Heavenly *Light* and *Warmth*.

Again, How came the *Air* which hath no *Design* in itself, to place it self so *commodiously* as it hath done between the *Earth* and the *Heavens* ? Why is there not a wide *vacuity* between ? Or if some *Body* must needs *intervene*, why was it not *Fire* or *Water* as well as *Air*, which of all other Bodies is the most *commodious* ? For had it been a *void Space*, there could have been no *Inter-course* between *Heaven* and *Earth* ; or had it been filled with *Fire* or *Water*, it would have consumed or drowned the *Earth* and all things belonging to it ; but as for the *Air* which is a *thin*, *swift*, *fluid* and *transparent* Body, it is of all others the most proper *Vehicle* of the Celestial Influences. For what other *Body* is there, that through such a *stupendous* Distance could have conveyed down to us the *Light* and *Heat* of the Sun, with such an *ineffable* Swiftneſs ; or what other *Element* could have been so proper for Animals to *move* and *breath* in ? Since therefore this Space between the *Earth* and *Heavens* might have been supplied with other *Bodies*, but with none so *fit* as *Air*, which yet is no way *conscious* of its own Fitness, and so cannot be supposed to *choose* this Space for itself, it is a plain *Evidence* that there was a

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wise Mind without it that chose this Habitation for it.

And now we are come down to this *terrestrial Globe*, which consists of *Earth* and *Water*, let us briefly consider the admirable Use of *both*, and of all things appertaining to them. How came the *senseless* Water to bore *Holes* and *Channels* in the Banks of the Ocean through long *Traacts* of Earth, and *against* its own Nature to *climb* up to the tops of Mountains, that so it may be able not only to run down *again* with *Ease*, but also to carry itself to such *Heights* afterwards, as the Necessities of *Men* and *Beasts* require, and to *unite* into large *Rivers*, that run into all the *inland* Parts of the Earth, watering both them and their *thirsty* Animals all along as they go, till at last they *return* into the Ocean again? How come this *dull* and *senseless* Element that can consult neither its own Conscience nor that of other Beings, to be *salt* where it is convenient for *itself* to be *salt*, viz. in the Ocean, by which it is preserved from *Putrefaction*; and *fresh* where it is convenient for other Beings that it should be *fresh*, viz. in the *Fountains* and *Rivers*, that so it may be fit to *fructify* the Earth, and to be a *wholsom* Drink for its Animals? How come so many *Rivers* and *Fountains* which do all arise from the *salt* Waters of the Sea, to be *stript* of their *salt* Particles, by running through the Pores of the Earth, and *thereby* to be rendred both *fruitful* to the Ground, and *wholsome* for *Men* and *Beasts*? How comes it to pass that so many *Clouds* as are *drawn* up out of the *salt* Ocean, should in their *Ascent* so far *shake off* their *Salt* as to *descend* back again upon the Earth.

Earth in *sweet* and *fresh* Showers? And how come those *Vapours* of which the *Clouds* consist, and which are much *thicker* and *heavier* than the Air, to be drawn aloft as they are by the *Rays* of the Sun, which have neither *Pumps* nor *Buckets* to exhale them? And when they are aloft in the Air, how come they to gather into *thick* Clouds, and not rather to *disperse* themselves about in that vast *Expansum*, or to *return* back again to the Earth in thin Vapours as they *arose*; and while they *hang* in the Air, what is it that *sustains* their *Weight*, and when they *fall*, how comes it to pass that they ordinarily fall in *soft* and *gentle* Showers that water the *Roots* of the *Grass* and *Corn*, without any prejudice to their *Stalks* and *Blades*, and not rather in *Mists* or *Streams*, which either would be *insufficient* to moisten the Earth, or *lay waste* its Corn and Fruit, with the *Violence* of their *Fall*? All which are *illustrious* Instances of a *wise* and *powerful* Providence, that *directs* and *orders* this *senseless* Element, and causes it ordinarily to *move* and *act* as if it had *Wisdom* in *itself*, and did therewithal *industriously* consult the *publick good* of *this World*; but this Argument you may find handled more at large in a late excellent *Treatise de Deo*.

And now we are arrived to the *Earth* whereon we live and move and have our Beings, which tho' itself be of a *broken* and *irregular* Figure, and seems to be rather the *mighty Ruins* of some more *beautiful* Structure, than an *Original Effect* of the *Divine Art* and *Contrivance*, yet contains in it the most *amazing* Instances of an *all-wise* and *all-powerful* Providence. For how comes this *dull*
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and *stupid Lump* to be impregnated with such an infinite *Variety of Seminal Vertues*, all which do proceed as *orderly and artificially* in the Formation of their *Plants and Fruits*, as if they were every one endued with a most *wise and intelligent Mind*? For since the *Plants* do all *derive* their *Nourishment* from the *inward Parts* of the *Earth*, it is necessary that some *Parts* of them should be *buried* under *Ground*, that so they may *come at* their *Food*; and that *these Parts* should be fitted with *spongy strings* to fasten them to the *Earth*. and to *suck* in those *Juices* of it whereon they *feed*; and accordingly the *seminal Vertue* of every *Plant* first *forms* itself a *Root* under *Ground*, which runs out *more or less* from the *Centre* of it into *greater or smaller Strings*, proportionable to the *Magnitude* of the *Plant* it bears, that so how *great* soever it be, it may by these *Strings* be so *fastned* to the *Earth*, as that the *Wind* to which its *upper Parts* are exposed, may not be able to *tear* them up; then this *seminal Form* whatsoever it be, *digests* these *Strings* into a *porous and spongy Substance* fit to *suck* in the *Juices* of the *Earth* on every side, and bores little *Holes* or *strait Fibres* through them from one end to the other, that so by these *Conduit-pipes* they may all *convey* the *Juices* they *imbibed* into the *Centre* of the *Root*; and having thus *formed* its *Root*, and by these *Strings* or *nervous Filaments* *supplied* it with plenty of *Juice*, by *strange mysterious Art* it *concocts* the *liquid Matter* into a *hard and solid Substance*, through which it also bores an infinite number of *strait Fibres* from the very *Centre* of the *Root*, to *convey up* with it those *Juices* that

that are lodged *there*, with the *thicker* parts of which it *nourishes* and *increases* it more *solid* Substance, thrusting forth the *thinner* towards the *Surface*, and the *thinnest* at the *Extremities* of its *Branches*; the former of which it *digests* into a *Bark* wherewithal it *cloaths* the *tender* Body of its Plant, to *defend* it against the *Violences* of *Heat* and *Cold*; the latter into *Leaves*, and therewithal *adorns* its *Branches*, and *shelters* its *Fruit* from the *scorching* of the *Sun*, and the *excessive Moisture* of the *Rain*; and by thus *distributing* the *still-rising* Juices, it *still encreases* its Plant till such time as it arrives to its *full growth* and *Maturity*; so that from the *utmost strings* of the *Root*, to the *Centre* of it, from the *Centre* of the *Root* to the *highest Branches* of it, from the *Branches* to the *Leaves* and *Fruit* of it, these *porous Fibres* run on, by which every part how *distant* soever from the *Root*, *sucks up* its *Juices* and *digests* them into its own *Substance*; for even the *Leaves* and *Fruit* are hung upon the *Branches* by *little, soft* and *Spongy* *Stalks*, through which there run *innumerable Fibres* that convey the *Juice* from the *Branches*, and by *stupendous Art* *distribute* it by their *Pores*, through all the *whole* *Body* of the *Leaves* and *Fruit*. But then by what particular *Art* the *Seminal* *Vertues* of each particular kind doth so *constantly* and *regularly* concoct and elaborate the *Juices* of the *Earth* into their own *specifick* *Smells* and *Tastes*, and *Figure* and *Colours*, is a *Mystery* that *confounds* and *puzzles* all our *Philosophy*. Now whence I beseech you proceeds this *curious, inimitable Art* which we with

with all our Reason can neither *transcribe* nor *comprehend*? Not from the *things themselves* sure; for how can they have *Art* that have no *Reason*? And therefore of Necessity it must proceed from some *all-wise, superintending* Mind, that either immediately *contrives* and *frames* them, or else *impresses* their seminal Virtues with its own *all-wise* and *powerful* Art whereby they *contrive* and *frame* themselves.

And if in the Composure of every *Plant* there are such *visible* Footsteps of a *Divine Art*, how much more of every *Animal*, whose Parts for infinite *Variety*, delicate *Smallness*, exquisite *Shape*, *Position* and *Temper*, do as far excel the other, as the *Offices* for which they are designed? For tho' the *plastick* Soul that forms the *Animal* hath not the least Ray of *Art* or *Reason* of its own, yet in the *Formation* of it, it proceeds with as much *curious* and *incomparable* Art, as if it were endowed with the most *perfect* Reason. For first it spins out the *thicker* Parts of the *seminal Matter* into little *Threds* or *Fibres*, part of which it hollows into *Pipes*, and part into *Spunges*, some whereof are more *thin*, and some more *solid*; all which with wondrous Arts it *cuts* and *prunes* in divers places, *fitting* their Ends to one another, and in divers Manners *knitting* them together into a *well-proportion'd* Structure of *Bones* and *Members*; then of the *thinner* Parts of the Seminal Matter it forms the *Intrails*, viz. the *Liver* and *Heart* and *Brains*, drawing out from each certain *Fibres* to be framed into *Veins*, and *Arteries* and *Nerves*, for which End it *bores* and *hollows* them through, *extends* and *stretches* them out at length, and di-

vides them into innumerable *Branches*, which it spreads through *all* the *Intrails*, and thereby maintains a mutual *Communication* between them, and derives the *Nourishment* and *Animal* and *Vital* Spirits through all the *Body*; and having thus *spun* the several *Parts* out of the seminal *Matter*, and curiously *woven* them together, it *concocts* the remainder of the *Matter* which is still supplied with new *Nourishment* into the *Substance* of those several *Parts*, and this in such *precise* and *regular* *Proportions*, as to form *every* one of them, tho' infinitely *various* from one another, into its own proper *Figure*, and *Measure*, and *Proportion*; so that within seven days after the *Conception*, the whole *Body* is entirely *framed*, and *distinguished* into all its proper *Parts* and *Members*, which, though they are so vastly great in their *Number*, so strangely different in their *Size* and *Figure*, so infinitely various in their *Motions* and *Tendencies*, do all contribute one way or other to the *Beauty*, and *Benefit* of the *Whole*; some to propagate the *Kind*, others to preserve the *Individual*, others to distinguish what is *necessary*, *convenient* and *pleasant*, from what is *dangerous*, *offensive* or *destructive* to its *Nature*; some to *pursue* what is *good*, others to *shun* what is *evil*, others to *enjoy* those *goods*, and others to *defend* it against those *evils* that *threaten* or *invade* it; so that of all these infinitely *numerous* and *diverse* *Parts*, not one can be *wanting* or *defective* without some considerable *Damage* to the *Whole*. How then is it conceivable that such an infinite number of *different* *Animals*, which are all so perfect in their *Kind*, so amazingly *curious* in their *Composition*, as that we
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with all our Reason can discern nothing in them that is either *superfluous* or *defective*, nothing in their *Figure* that is *irregular*, nothing in their *Position* that is *misplaced*, nothing in their *Motion* that is *exorbitant*, should all of them be framed by their several *Plastick Souls*, which are utterly *blind* and *irrational*, without the *Conduct* and *Direction* of an *all-wise* and *all-powerful Providence*? Should you behold a *confused* Heap of Earth, and Stone, and Iron and Timber without any *visible Artificer* near it, fall a *polishing* its own Parts, *sitting* them to one another, and *disposing* them into Order according to the Rules of Architecture; and at length *frame* them all together into the Form of a most beautiful Palace, would you not conclude that some *skilful* Mind were *invisibly* present there, and did *work* upon this *senseless* Heap, and *dispose* its Parts into this *comely* Order? And yet in the Composure of any one *Animal* there is infinitely *more* Art than in the most beautiful *structure* in the World. How then can we imagine that the *blind*, *artless* matter of which it is composed, could ever have *framed* it self into this *admirable* Form and Contexture, had not some *great* Mind been *invisibly* present at the Composition of it, or at least imprinted on its *artless* Matter, some powerful Signature of its own *wise* Art to *direct*, and *order* to *contrive* it.

I might from hence have proceeded to the formation of *Man*, the Masterpiece of all this lower Creation, in whose *frame* and *structure* there are such Miracles of Art as do outreach both the *Imitation* and *Wonder* of the most *raised* and *comprehensive* Minds. For who can sufficiently admire the

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Skilful Contexture of his *Corporeal* Parts, which though almost infinite in *Number* and *Variety*, do not only compose a *Body* of a most amiable *Symmetry* and *Proportion*, but are also as exactly *framed*, and *tempered* and *adapted* to perform the *Offices* of *Life* and *Motion*, and *Sense* and *Reason*, as *Art* or *Wit* can *fancie* and *imagine* them? But then how much more admirable is the *Soul* which *inhabits* and *animates* this *Body*; for of whatsoever *Substance* this thing we call our *Soul* is, it is evidently framed for *great* and *noble* *Operations*, to *disclose* the *Mysteries* of *Nature*, and to *dive* into its deep *Philosophy*, to *penetrate* into the *Causes* of things, and with its *nimble* and *sagacious* *Thoughts* to *survey* this ample *Theatre* of *Beings*; to *recollect* things past, and to *foretel* things to come, to invent the most useful *Arts* and comprehensive *Sciences*, to *dictate* good *Laws*, and *project* wise *Policies* for the *Government* of *Humane* *Societies*, and in a word, to *understand* the *right* *Reasons* of things, and to *regulate* its *Will* and *Affections* by them: and is it possible we should imagine a *Being* thus *exquisitely* framed to be the *Product* of a *blind* and *artless* matter; to be nothing but a *lucky* *Jumble* of *senseless* and *irrational* *Atoms*? For suppose it were nothing but *elaborated* *Matter*, yet certainly it requires infinite *Art* and *Skill* to *contrive* and *fashion* it into all those curious *Springs*, and *Wheels*, and *Mechanick* *Knacks* that are necessary to render it not only a *living* and *feeling*, but also a *wise* and *rational* *Matter*. For how is it conceivable that a little *Drop* of water without the *Assistance* of any *Mind* or *Providence*, should form it self not only into all the

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the Parts and Lineaments of a Humane Body, but also into a Humane Mind, a Mind of vast Desires and infinite Capacities of Knowledge, that can form Ideas with it self of every thing that is round about it, and from them can frame innumerable Propositions, and deduce them into Arts and Sciences : and in a word, that can move it self and the Body it lives in, by its own internal Springs, and form it self into so many various and contrary Affections, by the mysterious Force and Energy of its own Reason and Discourse ? If you beheld a dead Pencil move without any visible Hand, and dip it self into various Colours, and draw but an exact Picture of a Man, you would doubtless conclude either that some invisible Limbner, had infused into it the Art of Limbning, or did immediately manage and direct it. But should you find this Picture when it is drawn and finished, not only live and move, but reason and discourse, and exert all sorts of Animal and Humane Operations, could you imagine that ever the blind, irrational Pencil formed it of it self without being managed or directed by some superiour Mind or Providence ?

And thus I have given some brief Instances of the constant Direction of all sorts of things, how stupid and irrational soever, to some wise and good End, which is a plain Evidence of an universal Providence over the World, that in a constant and uniform Series directs things to their proper Ends that have no Aim or Design of their own, and so are utterly incapable to guide and direct themselves.

II. Another sensible Evidence of a divine Providence is, the sagacious Providence of things that

have no *Forefight* in themselves. For among irrational Beings that can neither apprehend *for* what *Ends* they act, nor by what *Means* they may best effect them, how strange is it to consider with what *Insight* and *Providence* they many of them act in *storing up* Provisions for themselves against a time of Extremity, in *framing* their own Beds and Nests, and *defending* themselves and their Young against approaching Dangers; in *educating* their Young, and propagating their Kind through all succeeding Generations, insomuch that if they were every one endued with reason of their own to *foresee* their own Dangers, and *forecast* their own Conveniency and Safety, they would not act with more *Skill* and *Sagacity* than they do. For thus the *Plants* that have neither *Sense* nor *Reason* to discern the Periods of their own Growth and Decay, when they have almost spent themselves, and are ready to *wither* and *die*, run up into Seed, as if they *forefaw* their own *approaching* Fate, and did thereupon *bethink* themselves of *propagating* their Kind before it be *too late*, and leaving a numerous *Posterity* behind them. And therefore since they have neither Thought nor Forecast *in themselves*, 'tis evident that there is a Providence that *thinks* and *forecasts* for them.

Thus also those Plants that shoot up on *high*, but are too *weak* to support themselves, such as the *Hop* and *Vine* and *Ivy*, run out into little *strings* or *tendrils* with which they *lay hold* upon some body that is *stronger* than themselves, as if they were *conscious* of their own weakness, and so to *prop up* themselves did *designedly* twist about those stronger bodies, that are best able to *support* them. And

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therefore since they neither know their own *weakness*, nor yet the *strength* of the *Trees* or *Wall* they depend on, it is evident that there is a wise Providence that knows *both*, and *guides* and *directs* them to their safety.

And as there is a visible Providence over *Plants*, so there is also over *brute* and *irrational* Animals, and especially over the *smallest* and most *contemprible*, who by reason of their natural *weakness* and *impotence* are less able to provide for themselves. For thus the Spider is a Creature as void of *Reason* as the Plant of *Sense*, and yet with what *wondrous* Art doth he spin his Web out of a *viscous* matter within his own Bowels? He *extends* the threads of it cross to one another, leaving equal Angles in the middle, *fastning* the extreme to the opposite threads, and then lest through the weakness of the slender threads of which it is composed, the Fly he hunts should happen to break through, he weaves several *under-nets* one within another, and with a wondrous Art *fastens* them all together, that so if *one* should fail, the *other* might hold; and when he hath thus fix'd and spread his *subtile* and *strange contrived* Snares, he lies in wait in a little Den without, made by him on purpose to *conceal* himself; from whence, as soon as the Fly is *entangled*, he swiftly *runs* and *seizes* it, and having *killed* it, carries it away and lays it up in a safe Repository against a time of Famine. In all which performance this *irrational* Insect proceeds as *providently* and *wisely* as if in a long deduction he had *inferred* one thing from another and acted upon the most *rational* deliberation; and therefore since he

is void of reason *himself*, and doth not determine himself by any natural Logic of *his own*. he must proceed by the reason and direction of some *wise Mind without him*, that hath the *guidance and disposal* of his motion. For he begins not to exercise his Art after 'he is arriv'd to a *riper age*, but is *born* with his Trade about him, and *spins and weaves* from his very Infancy; nor is there any *diversity* in his Manufacture, as there useth to be in those of *rational* Artificers, but 'tis always woven in the same *manner*, and *figure*, and *fashion*, which is a plain evidence that he effects it not by any *art or reason* of *his own* but by mere *natural instinct*, which is nothing but the *impression* of the art and reason of the *Author of Nature*, which impression knows not what it *doth*, nor upon what *reasons* it proceeds, but only *answers* to the Reason of God as the *signature* doth to the *Seal* that imprest it, and like an Echo *articulates and resounds* his Voice without *understanding* what it *means*. And as the *senseless* Echo when it *reverberates* words that carry *Sense and Reason* in them, supposes the original Voice to proceed from some *intelligent* Mind; so these *irrational* Instincts of Nature which express so much *art and reason* in their operations, do necessarily imply that there is some *wise Mind or Providence* to which they owe their *original and continuance*.

For thus to instance farther, with whata *strange and wonderful* Art do the *Bees* frame their *Combs*, which they divide on each side into a world of little *six corner'd* cells, and then prop them up with *middle walls* of pillars which they raise from
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the floor into arch, by which as they are rendered more *strong*, so the Bees have an entrance through to *repair* them whenever they *decay*; and having thus artificially *built* their houses, with what *industry* do they wander to and fro to gather the *sweet* dews of Heaven, whereon they live, from the *herbs* and *flowers* of the field, and with what care do they *treasure* them up in those little cells against *winter*, when they can neither go *forth* by reason of the *cold* to seek their sustenance abroad, nor yet *find* it if they *could*; and when they have fill'd their cells with their winter provision, they *providently* draw over the mouth of them a thin skin or membrane to *preserve* the grateful liquor lest it should *drop out* and be *lost*; and in a word, in what a regular order do they *live*, they *rest* and *labour* all together, and in the discharge of *several* offices conspire to the *same* work; some *press* the flowers with their feet, others with their mouths or down of their bodies gather up the moistures which these *press out* and carry them home to their cells; some bring home the *materials* of which these cells are compos'd, others *disburthen* them of it, others *build* with it, and others *plane* and *polish* the building. Thus all hands are at work first to *build* the house they are to dwell in, and to *divide* it into its several apartments, and then to *store* them all with provision against the ensuing time of scarcity. Now therefore (not to mention their wondrous *polity* and *government* of which so many curious observations have been made) how is it possible they should do all these things with so much *regularity* and *exact order*, without being guided by some

art and *reason*? But yet 'tis certain 'tis not by any reason of *their own*; they do not at all *consider* when they build, how needful houses are for themselves and their Winter provisions, nor how *convenient* that waxy matter which they gather is to build *those* houses, nor what necessity there is of dividing them into *distinct* cells and apartments; they *understand* not the nature of those sweet dews which they gather, whether they are *food* or *poison*, and when they gather more than they have present need of they *know* not why they do it, they *reason* not with themselves that Winter is approaching, wherein neither these *dews* will *fall*, upon which they live, nor themselves be able to go forth and *gather* them, and that therefore it behoves them to *store* themselves before-hand against the *ensuing* famine; and when that they have laid up their store and are binding it in with the membrane they draw over it, they do not consider that 'tis a *fluid* matter that will be apt to *run out* and be *lost*; and yet all these things they *perform* with as much *regularity* and *art*, as if they had thoroughly *weigh'd* and *considered* and perfectly *understood* the reasons of them; which is a plain evidence that they are acted by a reason that is not *their own*, and what *other* reason can this be than that of the *divine* mind which *governs* and *disposeth* all things? And the same may be said of *Ants*, and *Moles*, and *Palmer-worms*, and innumerable other animals, which though they have no reason of *their own*, are yet in many instances as evidently conducted by *reason* as any *rational* beings whatever.

For with what *admirable* art do the *irrational* Birds form their *nests* a little after their *coupling*; they begin to *build* though they neither *consider* that they are *breeding*, nor yet do *foresee* when they shall *lay*; by which it's plain that there is a Providence which *considers* and *foresees* for them; and though they understand not what materials are *fittest* to build their nests, nor in what order to *frame* and *dispose* them, yet there is a very *wise* understanding that *directs* them both to *choose* and *contrive* the materials, and this with greater *art* than *we* with all our *reason* can do. For as for the *outward* surface of the nests which comes not near their bodies, they frame it with *sticks* and *thorns*, which with *inimitable* art they *twist* and *interweave* into a *round* and *uniform* hollownes, which they commonly dawb round with mud to render it more *compact* and *warm*; when this is done though they *understand* not their own *specific* frame and constitution, yet they proceed as if they *did*, and suit their nests to the *strength* or *weakness* of their natures; for those of them that are of a *hardier* make content themselves with this *inward* plaistering, and when 'tis dryed proceed to *lay* and *hatch* their eggs on it, without troubling themselves to *line* it with any *softer* materials, as if they knew *beforehand* that the constitution of their young would be such as would not need any *softness* or *delicacy*; whereas those that are of a *tenderer* frame take care to cloath the *hard* plaistering with *straw* or *hay* or *moss*, upon which those that are *tenderest* of all make another layer of *hair* or *down* or *feathers*, as if they perfectly *understood* what degree of *softness* and *warmth* would be necessary

cessary for the preservation and nourishment of their tender off-spring. Since therefore it's certain that they *know* none of all these things, and yet they act as if they *did*, they must necessarily be supposed to act by the *direction* of some *wise* Mind that perfectly knows them all. And then again, considering with what *patience* and *diligence* the female sits upon her eggs when she hath *laid* them, as if she *understood* the philosophy of her own *warmth*, how necessary it is to *form* and *animate* and *hatch* them, and with what *care* and *industry* the male brings her in provision whilst she is *sitting*, that so she may not be forced by the necessities of Nature to *neglect* her eggs, and *leave* them too long exposed to the cold air, which in a short time would destroy the *tender* Principles of life *within* them; and in a word, with what *care* and *industry* they both conspire to *cherish* and *feed* their young when they are *hatch'd*, till such time as they are *cloath'd* and *fledg'd* and can fly abroad to seek provision for themselves; considering, I say, how in all these things they proceed as if they perfectly *understood* the *reasons* and *necessities* of their own actions, it's plain that they must be *guided* either by a reason in *their own*, or in some *other* mind, that hath the *command* and *conduct* of their motions. Now that it is not by a reason of *their own* is evident, because whatsoever they do, they *necessarily* do, and cannot possibly do *otherwise*, for they never *vary* in their operations, never try any *new* Experiments, but always proceed in the *same* road and *repeat* the *same* things in the *same* method, which is a plain sign that they cannot do *otherwise*, and consequently that they act
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not from *reason* but *necessity*; and therefore since they are *made* and *impelled* to act as they *do*, and yet do act so *rationaly* and *wisely*, that which *impels* them must be a *rational* mind either acting upon them *immediately*, or by a *fix'd* and permanent impression of its *art* and *reason* on their motions. For as *Aristotle* hath long since observ'd; ἔπε τεχνῇ καὶ ζήτῳντα καὶ βελευσάμενα ποιεῖ, *they do these things neither by any art nor council nor deliberation of their own.* They are not *masters* of the wisdom by which they act, but are merely *passive* to the impressions of that wisdom that are made *upon* them. for so men we see for their own *profit* and *others* pleasure can teach Dogs and other animals to *dance* the *measures* of *tunes* and other *artificial* motions, the *rules* and *ends* of which they understand not; for when they perform *these* motions, they neither *think* of their *masters* *profit* nor the *spectator's* *pleasure*, which is the *end* and *design* of them, nor understand the *proportions* of *Musick* which is the *rule* of them, so that the reason of their motions is only in their teachers mind, who by frequent *use* doth by degrees *imprint* the practice of his art upon their *fancies*; and if a *man* can so imprint his art upon these *artless* creatures, as to make them practise it *without* understanding either the *grounds* or *reasons* of it, how much more may an *All-wise* and *Almighty* mind. And therefore since *de facto* we behold a world of *curious* art among brute animals, that far exceeds all the *little* feats we can teach them, why may we not as reasonably believe, that any one of these *dancing* animals learn'd all his *artificial* motions, the reasons of which he *understands* not, without
any

any *arts-master* to teach him, as that *Ants* and *Bees* acquir'd all the *art* and *providence* they practise, without either *discovering* the reasons of it by any understanding of *their own*, or being ever *instructed* in it by any *other* provident mind; for *art* and *providence* cannot be supposed without *reason*, and therefore since the *reason* of their art is not in *themselves*, it must necessarily be in *some* mind *without* them that hath the *conduct* and *direction* of all their motions.

III. Another *sensible evidence* of a divine *Providence* is the mutual *agreement* and *correspondency* of things that have no understanding of *themselves*, or of *one another*. For if we look abroad into the world we cannot but observe an admirable *harmony* among things which yet have no kind of *knowledg* of *one another*, and therefore cannot be supposed to have *framed* and *adapted* themselves to one another, nor yet to be so fram'd and adapted, but by the art and contrivance of some very *wise* and *intelligent* Mind. For how can any cause fit any *two* things to *one another* without having some *Idea* in his mind of the natures of them *both*? If therefore in the nature of things we can discover a world of *mutual* suitabilities of *this* to *that*, and of *one* thing to *another*, it will be a sufficient argument that they *all* proceed from some *wise* Cause that had an *universal* *Idea* of their natures in his mind, and *saw* how *such* a thing would suit *such* a thing, before ever he *actually* adapted them one to another.

Now not to insist any further upon the admirable fitness of the *Sun* and *Earth*, the *Water* and *Earth*, the *Air* and *Heaven* and *Earth* one to another,

other, which I have largely discoursed already, how exactly is every *animal* fitted for its *element*, and every *element* for its *animals*? Thus the *Birds* for instance, are fitted with *wings* to fly aloft in the *air*, and the *air* is fitted to bear them up, and to yield to the *vibration* of their wings: the *Fishes* are fitted to swim in the *water*, having *finns* which serve instead of *oars* to cut through and divide the streams, and the *waters* are fitted for the *fish* to swim in, being a *soft* and *fluid* substance that is easily *cut* and *divided*; and as for the *earth* and those *earthy* animals that inhabit it, there is an *admirable* congruity between them; for they being all fram'd to *walk* or *creep* must have an *hard* and solid matter to move on, and the *earth* being an hard and solid matter requires such *animals* as can *walk* or *creep* on it; and as every *element* is fitted for the motion of its *animals*, and every *animal* to move in its *element*; so every element hath a *food* that is proper to the *appetites* of its *animals*, and every animal an *appetite* that is proper to the *food* of its element. So that as every animal is fitted within with all those *faculties* and *organs* that are requisite to its *procuring* and *enjoying* what is good for it, and its *shunning* and *repelling* what is *hurtful*, so it is also furnish'd *without* with all that is *necessary* or *convenient* for its *support* and *satisfaction*. Thus every faculty *within* hath an *object* without prepar'd for it, that is exactly *correspondent* therewith, without which, as hath been excellently observ'd, the *faculty* would become *vain* and *useless*, yea and sometimes *harmful* and *destructive*, as reciprocally the *object* would import *little* or *nothing* if such a faculty were not
provided

provided for and fitted to it. For thus the *Eye* would be perfectly *useless* if it were not for the *light*, and the *light* would be much *less considerable* if it were not for the *Eye*; for if all *light* were extinguish'd, all those *curious* colours into which the *light* is *refracted* would be utterly *insignificant*; and if all those *colours* were extinguished, the *Eye* would be utterly depriv'd of one of its most *pleasant* entertainments. And what use would there be of all that infinite variety of *melodious* sounds, *fragrant* odours, and *delicious* flavours which this frame of nature affords, were there no *hearing*, *smelling* or *tasting* faculties? and what would these *faculties* signify, were there no such *sounds* or *odours* or *flavours*? so that these *objects* and *faculties* are all as *perfectly* fitted one to another as it was possible for *art* to fit them; nothing could be better fitted for *seeing* than the *eye*, nothing better framed to render things *visible* than the *light*, and *light* can be *refracted* into no colour so *grateful* unto the *eye* as *green*, which is the *great* colour of Nature; and the same may be said of the *ear* and *sounds*, the *smell* and *odours*, the *taste* and *flavours*; and if the *eye* were made to *see* and the *ear* to *hear*, as there is no doubt but they *were*, being so exquisitely fram'd for that purpose; to be sure *light* was made for *seeing*, and *sounds* for *hearing*, and so for all the rest; and how is it possible that so many things should be made so exactly *harmonious* and *agreeable* with one another without the powerful *art* and *direction* of some very skilful mind, that knew before-hand that *this* thing would perfectly fit *that*, and consequently had a perfect *Idea* of them both? when therefore we be-

behold such exact correspondencies between the *motives* faculties of Animals and the *elements* they move in, between the *fruits* and *products* of those Elements and the faculties of *taste*, *digestion*, and *nutrition* in those animals that inhabit them, and in a word between all *sensible* objects *without* and *sensitive* objects *within*, how is it possible we should be so senseless as not to trace out an *all-directing* wisdom by foot-steps that are so *express* and *remarkable*? For suppose you heard a musical Instrument move its own strings into an *exquisite* harmony and run long divisions of *curious* and *well proportion'd* notes, without the impulse of any *visible* Artist, would you not conclude either that some *invisible* hand did immediately *touch* and *play* upon its strings, or that they were mov'd by some *internal* spring and contrivance of a musical mind? How then can we attend to the *admirable* harmonies of Nature, to the *natural* references and *due* proportions and *exact* correspondencies of all its innumerable parts to one another, without believing that there is some great *harmonical* mind which *run'd* it at first, and still *plays* upon it by the immediate *touch* and *impulse* of its own *invisible* hand.

And as all things are thus *fitted* and *adapted* together, so are they also most regularly *subordinated* to one another according to their *rank* and *worth*; the *senseless* elements with all their *fruit* and *product* being subject to the use of *animals* to whom they afford a vast *variety* of all conveniences and necessities answerable to their *desires* and *needs*; so that of all those vast numbers of *sensitive* Beings there is no one kind or individual, no

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not so much as a *fly*, or *worm*, or *insect* but what is plentifully supplied out of these common *store-houses* of Nature. And as the *elements* are subjected to the use of *animals*, so both are subject to the use of *Man*, who is as much superiour to the brute animals, as they are to the senseless elements. To him therefore, as it is most *fit* and *congruous*, all things here below pay tribute; the Earth ingenders within its bowels quarries of *stone* and *mines* of *coal* and *metals* to serve his necessary uses and conveniences, and spreads its surface with a vast variety of *Herbs* and *Flowers* and fruitful *Trees* to supply him with *Food* and with *Physick*, and treat him with *pleasure* and *delight*; to entertain his *eye* with beautiful *colours*, his *smell* with fragrant *odours*, and his *palate* with delicious *savours*; the Waters serve to quench his *thirst*, to dress his *food*, to fructifie his *fields* and *gardens*, to cleanse his *body* and *habitation*, and to maintain and facilitate his *intercourse* and *traffick* with all parts of the World; the Air fans him with refreshing *gales*, supplies him with *breath* and with *vital* and *animal* spirits; the Fire warms and cherisheth him, concocts his meat and drink into fit and *wholesom* nourishment, and serves him in his most necessary Arts and *manual* Operations. And as all the four *elements* do one way or other conspire to *our* use and benefit, so do all the *animals* too that inhabit them, though as yet there are *sundry* of them whose use we have not *discovered*, but as for the *generality* of them they are innumerable ways adapted to our use; some to furnish our Table with *food* and *delicacies*, others to prevent or to remove our Diseases with their
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medicinal Vertues ; some to *cloath*, and some to *adorn* our Bodies, others to *assist* us in, and others to *ease* us of our labours, and others to *entertain* us with chearful *sports* and *recreations*. Thus all things here *below* have as plain a reference to the use of Man who is the *noblest* part of them, as if some *wise* and *powerful* Mind had contriv'd them on purpose to *serve* and *benefit* him ; as on the contrary *Man* hath so plain a reference to them, considering his *needs* and his *sensitive* and *rational* faculties, as if the same *wise* Mind had fram'd him on purpose to *use* and *enjoy* them.

And is it possible that after all this we should be so *stupid* as not to *discern* those bright beams of *Wisdom* which shine through so many *perspicuous* correspondencies ? For it's certain that either they must be *design'd* by *Wisdom*, or *happen* by *Chance* ; and is it possible that a *blind Chance* which can do nothing *regularly*, and is the Parent only of *monstrous* and *deform'd* births, should thus exquisitely *fit* and *adapt* things to one another in such a *long* and *orderly* series ? that *Chance* which never yet compos'd a *tune* or wrote a *line* of coherent sense should ever be the Author of this great frame of things, in which there is more of *harmony* than in all the *musical* composures, and more of *Sense* and *Philosophy* than in all the *studied* Volumes in the *World* ; And if it cannot be the effect of *Chance* ; it must be the product of *Wisdom* and *Providence*.

. IV. Another *sensible* evidence of a divine *Providence* is the *continuation* of things in the same comely order which have no *government* of themselves. That things are put into a most *useful*,
Q *wise*,

wise and artificial order hath been sufficiently demonstrated under the foregoing particulars; now I would fain know *what* was it reduced them *to*, and still continues them *in* this order? did the *blind* parts of the matter whereof these things are composed, *once upon a time* as they were wandering through the field of infinite space *beckon* to one another, and by common *consent* assemble themselves into a *General Council*, and there *advise* together how they should *rank* and *marshal* themselves into a World, and when upon *grave* and *mature* advice they had *agreed* upon, and *describ'd* and *chalk'd* out the laws of their Motion, did they *break up* Council, and *set forth* in their several *lines* to the execution of their *Canons* and *Decrees*, till by their *oblique*, *parallel* and *counter-motions*, they at last *interwove* themselves into all those beautiful *contextures* we behold? He who can imagine this to be either *probable* or *possible*, must himself be as *dull* and *stupid* as those senseless parts of matter are, of which he *dreams*. Well then, since these things could not be effected by any Council or contrivance in the matter *it self*, was it by mere *chance* that these blind parts of matter *floating* in an immense space, did after several *justlings* and *rencounters* jumble themselves into this beautiful frame of things? Alas, this is a conceit, if possible, more *ridiculous* than the former; for how is it possible to imagine that *Chance* should ever make a *Man*? in the contexture of whose parts there are such *Wonders* of Art as do as far *exceed* the most *curious* Engines and Machines that ever humane Art *invented*, as the most *glorious* and *magnificent* Palace doth a Castle of Cards. And
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if Chance cannot so much as draw the *picture* of a Man, which is but a *rude* imitation of his *outside*; how much less can it shape, temper, and connect all those *hidden* and *subtil* springs of *life* and *motion*, *sense* and *imagination*, *memory* and *passion* within him? Well then, since it was neither from any *wisdom* in the matter of them, nor from any casual *motion* of that matter that this orderly series of things did proceed, was it from a *blind* necessity? but pray what *made* this necessity? how came the *matter* of these things that might have mov'd *otherwise*, having an infinite space *about* it; and no principle *within* it to incline it *one* way more than *another*, to determine it self to *this* series of motion? if you say it was by *Chance*, I have shew'd it is *impossible*; and if you say it was from *Eternity*, that is all one. For as an excellent Author of our own hath observ'd, Whether it were now, or yesterday, or from *Eternity* infers no difference as to *our* purpose; nor the *circumstance* of the *time*, but the *quality* of the *cause* being only here considerable; the same cause being alike *apt* or *unapt* yesterday as to day, always as *sometimes*, from all *Eternity* as from any *set-time* to produce such effects. So that 'tis as *possible* for matter fortuitously moved without any Art or Council to compose a World *now*, and to frame it into *Animals* and *Men* as it was from *Eternity*; that is; 'tis from *all Eternity*, and *now* equally impossible; and if it were by the Council of some *intelligent* Mind that it was *fram'd* into this world of Beings and orderly series of things, then it is doubtless by the same Mind that its order and harmony is still *continued* and *preserved*. For it is altogether

as impossible for matter of it self *unguided* by Wisdom and Art to pursue any *constant* course, as to fall into any *regular* form, it being as we see all torn and broken into little parts innumera-
many, and infinitely *diverse* in their *size*, and *figures*, and *motions*, and thence only fit in their several courses to *cross* and *confound* each other. How then is it possible without *vast* Wisdom and *unspeakable* Power so to manage this *wild* and *disordered* swarm of Atomes as to determine them to their proper *bounds*, continue them in their regular *ranks* and *files*, and preserve them in the same *tenure* of action, so as that in all those new productions of the *individuals* of every kind of *Plants* and *Animals* which are every day compounded out of them, they should none of them ever *extravagate* in their motions so as to *disturb* and *hinder* one another, and finally *disorder* and *interrupt* the natural course of Generation? When therefore we consider how this great *Machine* of the World (as the above-cited Author expresseth it) whose parts are infinite for *number* and *variety*, hath stood six thousand years together always *one* and the *same*, *unimpair'd* in its beauty, *unworn* in its parts, *unwearied* and *undisturbed* in its motions; through what an *infinite* series of generations and corruptions all its *plants* and *animals* have past, and yet how after they have been *corrupted* over and over, and their whole frames have been *broke* in pieces, and all their parts *divided* and *dispers'd*, they have still been generated *anew*, and *ralied* into the same *specifick* natures, which, tho' they still consist of *numberless* parts, are constantly drawn up into the *same* postures and figures
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and positions, and with strange *regularity* digested into the same *hansom* order, as if they all kept *time* with the *musical* Laws of some Almighty Mind, as the stones of *Thebes* did with *Amphion's* Lute, and thereby continually *danc'd* into their natural *figures*. When, I say, we consider these *strange* and *wondrous* things, what tolerable account can we give of the performance of them without an *over-ruling* Providence? For how is it imaginable that in a six thousand years course of Generations and Corruptions these *blind* and *undesigning* parts of matter, which by reason of their infinite *diversity* are so naturally apt to *thwart* and *disturb* one another, should maintain such *regular* courses of motion as still to *concenter* in the same forms, so as that through all this vast tract of time not so much as one kind of *plants* or *animals* should *miscarry*? how, I say, could this have been, had they not all along been conducted by a *steddy* *unerring* Providence?

V. Another *Sensitive* evidence of a Divine *Providence* is the *miraculous* events that have hapned in the World. By Miraculous Events, I mean such as either for their *matter* or *manner* of production do exceed the Power of *natural* Causes, or at least are produc'd by them out of their establish'd *course* and *order*. Such as *dividing the Sea*, *stopping the Sun*, *raising the Dead*, *curing the sick*, and *blind*, and *lame*, with a *touch* or *word*; of all which we have notorious instances both in the *Old* and *New* Testament, and these attested with as *full* and *convincing* Evidence as ever any matters of Fact were that are recorded in *History*. For as for the *Miracles* of the *Old* Testament,

besides that they were sundry of them *perform'd* in the publick view of Nations, and were *recorded* in those very Ages wherein they were wrought, and so could have been easily *disapproved* by ten thousand *living* Witnesses, had they not been *true*; besides that they were attested by the most *ancient* Heathen Poets and Historians in their *Mythologies* and *Histories*, who to be sure would never have yielded the glory of such wondrous Effects to a Nation whom they *hated* and *despised*, had they not been forced to it by *undeniable* Evidence; In a word, besides that they were *confirm'd* by the succeeding Prophets of that Nation, who both by the Miracles they wrought, and by the exact accomplishment of their Predictions, have sufficiently *evidenc'd* themselves to be *supernaturally* inspir'd; Besides all which, I say, the Miracles of the *Old Testament* are abundantly *attested* by the *New*, the credit whereof is *ratified* and *confirm'd* by a world of *new* Miracles wrought by our Saviour himself, and particularly by his *Resurrection from the Dead*, which are not only *in part* confessed by the *Jews* themselves, his most *mortal* Enemies, and by the *Heathen* Writers, who were *implacable* Persecutors of his Religion, but also by his own *Disciples* and *Apostles*, who, as I shall shew hereafter, were *Eye-witnesses* of these Miracles; and did not only *attest* them with their *Mouths*, but also *sealed* their Testimony with their blood, and *confirm'd* it before all the World with infinite *other* Miracles which they wrought in his Name, and which they *continued* to work for several Ages together, as is evident not only from the *wondrous* success of their *Ministry*, which

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without being attested with *such* miraculous Effects could never have propagated in so *short* a time such a *hated* Religion over all the World, but also from the confident *Appeals* which the *Christian* Writers frequently make to their *Heathen* Enemies, in which they *Subpœna* them in as daily *Spectators* of their wondrous Works, and for the *truth* of them *challenge* their own *Eyes* and *Ears*. So then that there have been such *miraculous Effects* can no more be *doubted* than that there have been such Men as *Pompey the Great*, or *Julius Cæsar*, the *former* being attested, all things considered, with much *more* Evidence than the *latter*.

And if this attestation be *true*, there *must* be a Providence ; for how is it possible that *blind* Nature which neither *deliberates* nor *chooses*, should of it self ever *vary* or *interrupt* its course without rushing into utter *confusion* and *disorder* ? How should any *part* of it, when 'tis once moved either *faster* or *slower* than ordinary, so *restrain*, or *quicken* its own motion as to reduce itself back again to its *Establish'd* Course ? For if it once move *faster*, it must have some degree of motion *superadded* to it, and till that is withdrawn it must move *faster* for ever : if it move *slower*, it must have some degree of motion *withdrawn* from it, and till that be restored it must move *slower* for ever : how then is it possible that *Nature* or any *part* of it which moves by a *blind* necessity, should of its own accord either *hasten* and then *slacken*, or *slacken* and then *hasten* the course of its motion, as it must do in the production of *miraculous* Effects, without being influ-

enc'd by an *Almighty* Providence; We have several miraculous Instances of the *diverting* natural Causes from their course, and *stopping* them in it; such as causing the Waters to *divide* and *stand still*, and the Sun to move *backward*. Now how is it conceivable that any *natural* Cause that hath no *will* of its own to *move* and *determine* it, should either *stop* its own motion and then *move* again, or *divert* from its course and then *return* again, if it were not under the command of some *Will without it*, that *guides* and *disposeth* it according to its own Council? But besides these *Scripture* Miracles, there are sundry *miraculous* Instances of the *rewarding* good Men and *punishing* bad, publickly recorded in the Histories of all *Ages*; some of *vindicating* the *Innocence*, others of *restoring* the *lives*, others of *relieving* the *necessities* of good Men; some of *detecting* the *Crimes* of bad Men, others of striking them dead in their *impious* Facts, others of punishing them *in kind*, and others of *inflicting* on them those very *Plagues* which they have *imprecated* on themselves to give *credit* to a *falsehood*; of some or other of which there is scarce any Age in the World which hath not been furnished with sundry *notorious* instances; so that unless we give the *Lye* to all *humane* testimony, and condemn the Records of all Ages for publick *Cheats* and *Impostures*, we cannot deny but that there have been sundry Miracles in the World, and if of all these Miracles that have been so *strongly* attested there be but any one *true* and *real*, that one is a *sufficient* argument of an *over-ruling* Providence. For if ever any thing hath been effected that is either *above*
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the Power, or *contrary* to the established Course of natural Causes, it must be brought to pass by the Power of God; and if God doth *sometimes* visibly exert his own *immediate* efficacy on this World, that is a plain evidence that he *always* governs it; for whenever he *thus* exerts it, it is for *some* reason to be sure, and for *what* other reason should he thus strip his Arm and *visibly* exert his Power *upon* or *before* us, but either to *awaken* our *attention* or to *confirm* our *faith*, or *alarm* our *fear*, or *encourage* our *hope*? and if *ever* he had any *such* design upon us, it must be in order to his *governing* us; for to what other purpose can an *Almighty* Being be supposed to address himself to *our* Hope and Fear, and Faith and Attention, but to *subdue* and *reduce* us under his Rule and Government?

VI. And lastly, another *visible* evidence of a *divine* Providence is *Predictions* of *future* and *remote* contingencies. That there *have* been such things hath been *universally* acknowledged by *Heathens* as well as *Jews* and *Christians*. As for the Heathens, *Tully* gives numerous instances of it in his two Books of *Divination*; in the first of which he sets down this as the great Principle of Prediction: *Esse Deos, & eorum providentiâ mundum administrari, eosdemque consulere rebus humanis, nec solum universis, verum etiam singulis, i. e. That there are Gods, and that by their Providence the World is governed, that they take care of humane Affairs, and this not only in general, but in particular.* And of these Predictions he tells there was one *Chrysippus* who wrote a large Book, in which he gives *innumerable* instances of them, *all*
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confirmed by very good Authority. Besides which there were their *Oracles* and their *Sibylline Writings*, among which if there had not been a great many true Predictions, it is not to be imagined that ever the *wiser* and more *inquisitive* part of Men should be so far imposed on as they were to pay such a mighty *respect* and *veneration* to them, and that not only for a *little while*, but for several *Ages* together. But as for their *Oracles* there are sundry of them *recorded* in ancient *Historians* together with their *punctual* accomplishments; and *Tully* in particular tells us of one of *Apollo* his *Oracles* which foretold a thousand years before that *Sypselus* the Tyrant should reign at *Corinth*. And *Varro* makes mention of one *Veetius Valens* an Augur in the time of *Romulus*, who when *Rome* was building, foretold by the flying of *twelve Vultures*, that the *City* should continue a thousand two hundred years, which accordingly hapned. But as for the *reality* of Predictions we need seek no farther than the *Holy Scriptures*, in which you have sundry *Prophecies* of things which hapned a long time *after*, as particularly of the deliverance of the *Jews* from those *two* Captivities, the one in *Egypt*, the other in *Babylon*; the *former* of which was foretold four hundred years, and the *latter* above seventy years before it came to pass, and yet both of them accomplished *punctually* to a day, as you may see in *Gen. 15. 13.* compared with *Exod. 19. 41.* *Jer. 25. 12.* compared with *2 Chron. 36. 21, 22.* which *latter* Prophecy is not only recorded in Scripture, but mentioned by *Eupolemus* an Heathen Historian cited by *Eusebius*, *Præpar. pag. 454.* Thus also you have *Esay* his Pro-

Prophecy of *Cyrus* whose name and achievements he most *exactly* foretels long *before* he was born, *Esai.* 45. 1, &c. And then for *Daniel's* Prophecies of the grand Revolutions of the Empires of the World, they do so *punctually* describe what hapned long *after*, that *Porphyry* himself, though a mortal Enemy to Christianity, is forced to *confess* the exact agreement of his *Prophecies* with the *succeeding* Events (*vid. S. Chrysoft. cont. Jud. Tom. 6. p. 326.*) and hath no other way to *evade* the force of them but by affirming without any colour of *Reason* or *Authority* that they were written *afterwards* in or near the time of *Antiochus Epiphanes*, though it is evident that the *LXX* Interpreters who translated the *Old Testament* a hundred years before, translated *this* Prophecy of *Daniel* with it. And *Josephus* expressly tells us, that *Jaddus* the High-Priest shewed this very Prophecy to *Alexander* the Great, who lived long before *Antiochus*, *Joseph. Antiq. l. 11.* But to name no more, there are the Prophecies of the *Messias*, of the *place* and most *particular* circumstances of his *Nativity*, and *Ministry*, and *Life*, and *Death*, and *Resurrection*, and *Ascension*, all which were so *punctually* accomplished in our blessed Saviour, that did not the *Jews*, in whose hands they have been always preserved, *own* and *acknowledge* them, one would be apt to suspect that they were *forged* on purpose by some Christian to countenance our Saviour's pretence of being the true *Messias*.

• And if there be any such thing as Prophecy, if but any *one* of all these Instances be *real* (and that none of them should, would be *very* strange) this *one* will be a sufficient evidence of a Divine

Providence ; for to foresee things at a *distance*, and before the Causes are *in being*, so as to describe before-hand the precise *Time*, and *Place*, and *Manner* of their existence, or to foresee things *casual* and *contingent*, that wholly depend upon the free choice and determination of *voluntary Agents*, requires a mind of *infinite* comprehension, that sees through all the whole *Series* of *Causes*, and hath a perfect prospect not only of those things that *actually* exist, but also of all that are *future* and *possible*. For how is it possible to foresee a *remote* futurity in all its *particular* Circumstances, whose immediate Cause is either *unborn*, or *free* and *undetermined*, without having a *perfect* inspection not only into the *natures*, and *inclinations*, and *tendencies* of things, but also into all their particular *Conjunctions* and *Conspiracies* ? and that Mind which sees into all *these*, must needs be *all-seeing* and having nothing *concealed* from it, that is either *present*, or *future*, or *possible*. So that if there be any such thing as *Prediction* of *remote* and *contingent* futurities, it must necessarily proceed from an *all-seeing* Mind ; and if there be an *all-seeing* Mind that *oversees* the whole World, and accurately *inspects* all that is *past*, or *present*, or *to come* in it, is it imaginable that *such* a Mind should sit looking on as an *idle* Spectator, and *act* no part it self in such a *vast* and *busy* Scene of things ? For that it thus exactly *inspects* and *takes notice* of the World, is a plain Argument that it is greatly *concerned* for it ; and that it should be greatly concerned for it, and yet *do* nothing about it, nor *exercise* any *Providence* over it, is altogether *inconceivable*. And thus I have shewn, with all

the plainness I could, what Evidences there are to create in us a belief of a divine Providence, which I perswade my self are such, as duly considered, cannot but prevail with Minds that are not steel'd, against all convictions, and utterly abandoned both of their Reason and Modesty.

SECT. III.

The Objections against Providence considered and answered.

I Now proceed to the *third* and *last* thing proposed to be treated of in this Chapter; and that is to shew the *Insufficiency* and *Unreasonableness* of the common Pretences to *Infidelity* in this matter; and here, not to insist upon all the *little* and *shameful* Cavils which have been made against Providence, which are so very *inconsiderable* that 'twould be too great a *Credit* to them to be seriously confuted; I shall insist upon those only which are the *common*, and do carry the fairest shew of Reason with them, and they are these five:

I. That the Exercise of a Providence doth not comport with the Majesty of God.

II. That it doth not consist with the Ease and Happiness of God.

III. That it is not reconcileable with the manifold Evils which we behold in the World.

IV. That

IV. That if there were such a Providence, it could not admit of the *unequal* Division of *Goods* and *Evils* which are made in *this* World.

V. That it is not to be reconciled with the *wretched* State and Condition to which we behold the greatest part of Mankind *abandoned*.

I. It is objected against the Being of Providence, that it doth not *comport* with the *Majesty* of God to take *notice of*, or *concern* himself about the *little* Affairs of this World. Which is *such* an Objection as carries its own *Answer* with it; for I would fain know which is most *suitable* to Majesty, to *sit still* or to *act*, to *wrap up* it self in everlasting *Sloth* and *Idleness*, or to *display* it self in a *vigorous Activity*? And if it be *greater* and more *Majestick*, as doubtless it *is*, for any Being to *employ* and *exercise* its Powers, than to let them *lie asleep* and make no *use* of them, I would fain know in what *higher Sphere* can God exercise his Powers than in *governing* the World. For to govern well is the *best* and *greatest* thing that we can frame an Idea of; 'tis to *do* the *greatest* good, to *dispense* the *noblest* Virtues, and to *shed forth* the *amplest* Sphere of Benefits. And therefore since the World is such a *vast* Dominion, doubtless the most *glorious* Employment that the *largest* Mind can undertake, is to *rule* and *govern* it; and there is nothing can be *greater* and more *Godlike*, than to sit at the *Helm* of this *floating* Universe, and *steer* its Motions to their Ends with a *steddy* and *unerring* Hand. What therefore can God do more worthy of himself than to govern the World *well* and *wisely*? Or wherein can he better *display* the

the Glory of his *own* Perfections, than in keeping this *mighty* Engine in such an admirable *Order*, so as that though its Parts are infinite in *Number* and *Variety*, and in their several *Lines* of Motion do frequently *cross* and *intersect* each other, yet they do neither *clash* nor *interfere*, *disturb* nor *confound* one another, but in their different *Functions* mutually *assist* each other, and all *conspire* in a common Good, composing out of their infinite *Discords* a most elegant *Harmony*, in which mighty Performance there is scope enough for an infinite *Power* to *exert* its utmost *Activity*, for an infinite *Wisdom* to *employ* its utmost *Skill*, and for an infinite *Goodness* to *put forth* its utmost *Beneficence*.

So that to undertake this Province of *governing* the World, is so far from being *beneath* the Majesty of God, that it would be an unpardonable *Arrogance* for any but a God to *undertake* it ; and if *Contrivance* be the End of *Wisdom*, *Action* of *Power*, *Beneficence* of *Goodness*, as doubtless they are, where can the infinite *Power*, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* of God find a more ample Sphere for *Action*, *Contrivance*, and *Beneficence* than in the *Government* of the World ? And if it be the proper Exercise of Majesty to *govern*, what can better comport with the *greatest* Majesty than to *display* it self in the *Government* of the *largest* Dominion, which is that of the World ?

But then considering that God himself is the *Father* of all this great *Family* of Beings, how can it be *beneath* his Majesty to *take care* of his own *Offspring* ? Why should it be below him to provide for any thing which was not below him

to create? if there be any thing in this World so contemptible as not to deserve his *Regard*, why did he create it? If there be not, why should he *disdain* to govern it? And if every thing in this World hath some *End* for the sake of which God thought it *worthy* to be one of the *Objects* of his Creation, why should he not as well think the constant *Direction* of it to that *End*, to be an Object *worthy* of his *Providence*?

II. It is further *objected* against the Being of God's *Providence*, that it is *inconsistent* with his *Quiet* and *Happiness*. For to *attend* to such an *infinite* number of things as the *Government* of the World includes, cannot but *distract* his Thoughts, and thereby *disturb* him in the *Injoyment* of himself. All which is a *gross* mistake, arising from no other cause but our measuring God by *our selves*; because we find our own Minds so *narrow*, and our own Powers so *limited*, as that we cannot without *Distracti*on attend to *many* things at *once*, therefore we conclude that this *mighty* Business of governing the World must needs be very *uneasie* to God. Whereas if we considered God as a Being that is *infinitely perfect*, whose *Almighty Power* implies an *Ability* to do whatsoever is *possible*, and whose *infinite Knowledge* includes an universal *Prospect* of all things *past*, *present*, and *to come*, this would easily convince us of the *Vanity* and *Falsehood* of this *Objection*; for it is by reason of *Imperfection* that Beings operate with *Labour* and *Difficulty*; it is because their Powers are *weak*, and not able to conquer without *struggling* the *Resistances* of the *Objects* upon which they operate; but against *perfect* and *infinite* Powers there are no *Ob-*

jects can make such *Resistance* as to put them upon *struggling* and *labour*; so that to an *omniscient* and *omnipotent* Mind there can be nothing difficult to be *known* or *effected*; and it is altogether as easie to it to know all things that are *knowable*, and do all things that are *possible*, as to know or do any *one* thing whatsoever; because whatsoever it doth, it doth *perfectly*. How then can the Government of the World be *difficult* and *uneasie* to God, whose Knowledge and Power are *perfect* and *infinite*, and consequently can *inspect* and *govern* all the Beings in the World with as much *Facility* as if they had only *one* Being to take care of; and if *one* Man can with Ease manage *one* Business which he *perfectly* understands, why may not God manage *all*, who understands all *better* than we understand *any one*; and suppose the things of the World were *infinite*, yet since God's Knowledge and Power are *infinite too*, there is the very same Proportion of *Infinite to Infinite* as of *One to One*.

For it is to be considered that the natural *Tendency* of infinite *Power* is to *Action*, of infinite *Wisdom* to *Contrivance*, of infinite *Goodness* to *Beneficence*; and how can we imagine that it should be any *Disturbance* to God to follow the *Inclination* of his own Perfections? And therefore since it is *equally easie* to his *infinite* Power, and *Wisdom*, and *Goodness* to exert themselves in a *larger* Sphere of *Action*, *Contrivance* and *Beneficence* as in a *narrower*, why should it more *disturb* him to govern a *whole World*, than *one single* Being? It would doubtless be *rather* a disturbance to him to *act* nothing, to *contrive* nothing,

and to do *no good* ; because this would be to *cross* the Inclination of his own Perfections ; but since it is as *easy* to him to exercise those Perfections about *many* things as about *few* ; to exercise them about a *world* of things must rather be a *Delight* than a *Disturbance* to him, because the more he *exercises* them, the more he *complies* with their natural *Tendencies* and *Inclinations*.

And what though this World be a *great* and *cumberfom* Mass of things ; it can be no Labour to God to *move* and *actuate* it, who as an *universal soul* is diffused *through* it, and vitally *present* with every part of it ; for he moves it not as *Bodies* move *Bodies* by *thrusting* and *pressure*, but as *Souls* move *Bodies* by *Thought* and *Will* ; and as *our Soul* doth move its *Body*, and determine the *Motion* of its *Members* merely by *thinking* and *willing*, without any *material Pressure*, without any *Machines* or *Engines*, even so God, who is the *great Soul* of the *World*, doth *actuate* every *Part*, and *regulate* every *Motion* of it without any *laborious* heavings or thrustings, merely by the *all-commanding* Influence of his own *Almighty* *Thought* and *Will*. And if it be no Labour to *our Soul* to *think* and *will*, and therewithal to move our *Body*, why should we think it any Labour to God by the same *Operations* to move the *World* ? For suppose *our Soul* were *clothed* with a *Body* as *large* as the *whole Universe*, and were but *vitally present* with every *Part* of it, it would doubtless *move* it *all* with as much *Ease*, and *command* it every way with as much *Freedom* as it doth the *Body* wherein it *now* resides ; how then can it be *difficult* to a *perfect Mind* which *penetrates*

all through, and *co-exists* with every Part of this material World, to *move* and *actuate* the Whole, and *moderate* all the Motions of it according to its own *Will* and *Pleasure*?

III. It is farther *objected* against a *Providence*, that it is not *consistent* with the *manifest Evils*, both *moral* and *natural*, which we behold in this World. If there were a *just* and *gracious* Providence over-ruling the World, how can it be imagined that it should ever permit so many *Irregularities* as we every day behold in *Mens Lives* and *Manners*, or suffer so many *Calamities* and *Miseries* to befall its Subjects? Both which as I shall shew you are very fairly *consistent* with a *just* and *righteous* Providence.

For as for the first, to wit, the *moral* Evils or Irregularities of *Mens Manners*, the *Permission* of them in the World is no more inconsistent with the *Goodness* of God's Providence, than his *making* of *free Agents* was with the *Goodness* of his Nature: For his *Permission* of *sin*, is no more than his permitting *free Agents* to act *freely*, and according to that *Liberty* to *Good* and *Evil* wherewith he framed and created them; and why may he not as well *permit* them to act *freely* as *create* them to act *freely*? But to be *essentially* determined to *Good*, so as not to have any *natural* Liberty to *Evil*, seems *inconsistent* with the *State* of a *Creature*; for there is no *Will* can be *naturally* and *essentially* determined to good, which is not conducted by an *infallible* Mind; for whilst the *Mind* which is the Guide may possibly *err*, the *Will* which is guided by it must be liable to *go astray*. Since therefore no *Will* can be *essentially* good but

that which is guided by an *infallible* Mind, and since no Mind can be *essentially* infallible but one that is *omniscient*, it necessarily follows that to be free to Good and Evil is as *natural* to all reasonable Creatures, as to be *finite* in *Knowledge* and *Understanding*; and accordingly our Saviour declares that to be *naturally* and *essentially* good is the *incommunicable* Prerogative of the *divine Nature*, Luke 18. 19. and if *so*, then either God must have made us *free* to Good and Evil, or *not* have made us *at all*, and there must have been no such Orders of Being as *Men* and *Angels*, which are the *Crown* and *Glory* of all the Creation; and is it not much *better* that there *should* be such Beings, than that there should be *no* such thing as *Liberty* to Good and Evil? And if it were not inconsistent with the Divine Goodness to *create* free Agents, why should it be inconsistent with it to *permit* them to act *freely*? 'Tis true indeed *we* are naturally more *free* to Evil than the *Angels*, and *some* Angels perhaps were more free to it than *others*; but what then? Was God obliged in Goodness to make all Kinds of Beings *equally perfect*? If *so*, there must have been but *one* Kind of Beings in the whole Universe, and consequently there must have been *infinite* Kinds of Beings that are *capable* of Happiness for ever *unmade*, or for ever *unprovided* for. Wherefore since the Goodness of God was so infinitely *fruitful* as to *communicate* it self in *different* Degrees of Perfection to all *Possibilities* of Being, that so there might be *no* Kind wanting to *compleat* the Universe, it was requisite that there should be a *mean* Degree of Perfection between *Angels* and *Brutes*;
other

otherwise there would have been a *Gap* and *Chasm* in the World, not only a *possible* Kind of Being wanting, but a Kind which by *partaking*, both of *Reason* and *Sense* of *Spirit* and of *Matter*, is the *Σύνδεσμος* *ζωνὸς τῆς ἀνω καὶ τῆς κάτω*, as *Simplicius* expresses it, i. e. *the vital joynt that clasps the upper and lower World together*; and if it were no way *unsutable* to the Goodness of God to create the two *Extremes*, viz. *Angels* and *Brutes*, why should it be thought *unsutable* to make a *middle Nature* between them?

It is true, by *partaking* of *both* Natures, we are not only *free* to *Evil* in *common* with *Angels*, but also liable to *stronger* Temptations to it than they; because we are placed in a tempting *Body* among a great many brutish *Passions* and *Appetites*, and that *Body* is placed in a tempting *World* among a great many sensitive *Goods* and *Evils*, that are continually importuning those *Appetites* to *mutiny* against *Reason*, and to carry us away captive into *Folly* and *Wickedness*; but to place us in *this* state is so far from being *inconsistent* with the Goodness of God, that it is exactly *pursuant* to the *Design* of a most *wise* and *gracious* Providence. For since we are placed by the *Condition* of our *Natures* in a *lower* Rank of Being and Perfection than *Angels*, we have no more reason to complain of, *that*, than *Ants* or *Flies* have that they are not *Men*. But in this *imperfect* state the *highest* good that Providence could *design* us was to put us into a state of *Trial* and *Probation*, wherein by the *good use* of our *Liberty* we might by degrees *fit* our selves *for*, and at length *arrive* to a *better* and more *raised* Condition, and by an or-

derly Progression from this rude and imperfect state, might in the different Periods of our Lives grow up unto higher and more excellent Capacities, and at length ripen into Perfection. Now in order to our Trial it was requisite we should be placed among Difficulties, without which no Proof can be made of our Vertues, of our Patience, and Temperance, and Chastity, and Equanimoty, Meekness and Sobriety; all which are proper to us as Beings made up of Angel and Brute; from the latter of which Natures all those brutal Appetites arise in us, in the good or bad Government, whereof consists the Nature of Humane Vertue and Vice. So that this present state of our Life is intended by God for a Field of Combat between our Sense and our Reason, our brutal and angelical Nature, and that the Victory of our Reason might through the Difficulty of it be rendered more glorious and rewardable, God hath furnished its Antagonist with the Weapons of worldly Temptation to assault and oppose it, to try its strength and mettle, and to exercise both its active and passive Virtues; intending when it hath conquered, to translate us hence as a Reward of our Victory into a free and disintangled state, where we shall be vexed and inticed no more with the Importunities of sensual Lust and Affection, but to all Eternity enjoy the Serenity and Pleasure of a pure, angelical Nature. And what is there in all this that is any way unsutable, yea, that is not every way answerable to the Goodness of Providence? 'Tis true, instead of conquering, we may, if we please, yield our selves captive to Folly and Wickedness; but what then? Is Providence to be blamed for

for leaving Mens Hands at Liberty, because some have been so *desperate* as to cut their own Throats? 'Tis sufficient that he hath *proposed* to us *Reward* enough to *encourage* us to *contend*, and *contributed* to us *Assistance* enough to *enable* us to *conquer*, and having done all that becomes a *wise* and *good* Governour, to prevent our *Sin* and *Ruine*, who is to be blamed for it but *our selves*? God leaves us at *Liberty* indeed among *Temptations* to *Evil*; and this the very *State* and *Composition* of our *Natures* requires; but all he *designs* by it, is to *Exercise* our *Virtues*, and thereby to *improve* and *train* us up to a state of *higher* *Perfection*, and to *furnish* us with glorious *Opportunities* of *fighting* for and *winning* *Crowns* and *Reward*; and this is so far from any way *reflecting* on the *Goodness* of his *Providence*, that it is an *illustrious* *Instance* of it; and yet 'tis only *thus far* that he is concerned in the Being of *sin* in the *World*; all the *rest* is owing to our own *mad* and *desperate* abuse of our natural *Liberty*, to our *wilful* *Opposition* to his *gracious* *Intentions*, and *obstinate* *Resistance* to his *powerful* *Arts* and *Methods* of *preventing* our *Sin* and *Ruine*. What then can be more *unreasonable* than for us to *object* against the *Goodness* of God's *Providence* that which is *purely* the *Effect* of our own *Madness* and *Folly*?

And if the *Evil* of *Sin* be no way *inconsistent* with the *Goodness* of *Providence*, much less is the *Evil* of *Misery*, since the *Generality* of those *Evils* which we *suffer* in this *World* are either the *natural* *Effects*, or the *just* *Punishments*, or the *necessary* *Antidotes* and *Preventives* of our *sin*. And therefore when you come into a great School

of *wild* and *unruly* Boys, you may as well argue that there is no *Master* of it, because there are *Rods* and *Ferulaes* in it, as that there is no *Providence* over this *sinful* World, because there are *Miseries* and *Afflictions* in it; for upon the Being of *Sin* in the World, the Being of *Misery* is so far from being an Argument *against* Providence, that 'tis rather a Demonstration *of* it; because a *sinful* World, can no more be governed without *Misery*, than an *unruly* School without *Correction*.

IV. Another Objection that is made against Providence is that *unequal* division of *Goods* and *Evils* that is made in the World. If there were a *just* Providence that *over-ruled* the World, one would think it should make a more *visible* Distinction between *good* and *bad* Men in the *Distribution* of its *Rewards* and *Punishments*; whereas in the *ordinary* Course of things we see *all things* happen alike to *all*, and *many times* it fares *worst* with the *best*, and *best* with the *worst* of Men. Now because this is the *greatest* and most *universal* Objection that was *ever* urged against the *Providence* of God, I shall in answer to it endeavour to shew, 1. That it is for the most part *false* and *groundless*, 2. That *so far* as it is *true*, it is no Argument *at all* against a *Providence*.

First, I say, this Objection, that there is no *Difference* made among Men as to the *Goods* and *Evils* of *this* World, is in a great Measure *false* and *groundless*. For I make no doubt but in the *ordinary* Course of things *good* Men are more *prosperous* even in *this* World than *bad*; as for times of *Persecution*, they are a just *Exception* from the *general* rule of Providence; because therein God to serve

his own Glory, and the great Ends of Religion, exchangeth with good Men *spiritual* for *temporal*, and *heavenly* for *earthly* Enjoyments, which is such an *Exchange* as no man will account *Robbery*, that understands the just *value* of those *different* *Commodities*.

'Tis true, it hath been an *usual* Complaint in all *Times* and *Ages*, that it fares *best* with the *worst*, and *worst* with the *best*; and through the *commonness* of it, it is now grown into a *Maxim*. But it is to be considered that Men always *pity* the *miserable* and *envy* the *prosperous*, and that these *Passions* do naturally *bribe* their *Judgments* to think *worse* of the one, and *better* of the other than *either* deserve; for those whom we *pity* we are inclined to *love*, and those whom we *love* we are inclined to *think well* of; as on the contrary, those whom we *envy* we are inclined to *hate*, and those whom we *hate* we are inclined to *think ill* of; and then because God doth not *reward* and *punish* Men according to the Sentence that our *blind* *Pity* or *Envy* passes on them, we are ready to *quarrel* with his *Providence*. And besides, there are a world of *close* *Hypocrites*, that under a mighty *show* and *Ostentation* of *Piety* do *secretly* indulge themselves in sundry *wastful* and *ruinous* vices, which many times reduce them to *Poverty* and *Misery*, and these we commonly rank among the *good* it fares *ill* with; as on the contrary there are abundance of *good* Men, that in the *Course* of a *reserved*, *modest* and *unaffected* *Piety*, which makes but very little *show* in the *Eyes* of the *World*, are *blest* and *prospered*, and these we as commonly rank among the *bad* that fare *well*. Since therefore we are such *incom-*
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petent Judges of good and bad Men, we shall be very careful how we object against the Providence of God such *Maxims* as are only founded on our own fallacious Observations. But could we strip our selves of Pity and Envy, and penetrate into the insides of Men, I doubt not but we should soon be satisfied that good Men have much the Advantage of bad, even as to the Happiness and Prosperity of this World; for though perhaps there are many more bad Men prospered than good, because there are far more bad than good men in the World, yet in Proportion to their Numbers I doubt the prosperous good, would far exceed the prosperous bad, though there should be but thirty of the one to forty of the other; and supposing that in Proportion there were more bad men than good advanced to worldly Greatness, (which yet is very doubtful, considering how prone we are to judge ill of great Men, and to reckon more of them into the Number of the bad than we ought, through Envy and Misunderstanding the Reasons of their Actions) yet it is to be considered that the true state of worldly Happiness and Prosperity consists not in a great but in a moderate Fortune, and that the good things of this World are no where so freely and entirely enjoyed, as in the middle Region between Poverty and Riches; for as Poverty is attended with Famine and Cold and Anguish, so Greatness is attended with Hurry and Tumult, impaled with Cares, and imprisoned with Pomp and tedious Ceremony; so that the truly unfortunate are the Necessitous and the Great, while the middle State without partaking of the evils of either, includes all that is truly desirable in both Extremes; all their

Poverty

Poverty *wants*, and all that Greatness *enjoys*; and in *this* happy state I dare boldly affirm there are proportionably *far more* good men than bad; For it is a very *rare* thing for a *good* man that is *honest* and *industrious*, and *depends* upon God for a Blessing, to be reduced to *extreme Necessity*; so *very rare*, that *David* in all his life-time could not produce one Instance of it, *Psalms 37. 25.* for *miserable* Poverty is usually the Consequence either of *Idleness*, or *Luxury*, or *Faction*, or *Knavery*; all which are *inconsistent* with true Goodness; and a good man in any Condition on this side *pinching* Necessity, is *ordinarily* even in *this* Life far more happy than the most *gay* and *prosperous* Sinner, whose *outward* Glory and Greatness is usually nothing but the *gaudy* Cover of a *Tragical Inside*, of a Mind that is *tortured* with *Pride* and *Envy*, with *boundless* Hopes, *insatiable* Desires, and *horrible* Reflections, that *dash* and *embitter* all his Enjoyments, while the good Man under his *mean* and *simple* Outside, carries a *great* and *happy* Soul, a *contented* Mind, a *cheerful* Heart, and a *calm* Conscience, which mightily *sweeten* all his Enjoyments, and make his *homely* Morfel *outrelish* the most *studied* Luxuries. Let us therefore but judge *impartially* of men, and but *truly* state what is the most happy Condition of *humane* Life, and *proportion* the number of the *good* to the *bad*, and *balance* the *Insidies* of the one with the *Outsides* of the other, and I doubt not but we shall be easily convinced that even in *this* Life the good *ordinarily* fare much *better* than the bad; for in *true* Computation *Necessity* and *Greatness* are the only *unfortunate* States of humane Life, and in *these* there

are far more *bad* Men than *good* ; but *between* these two *all* Conditions are in a manner *indifferent* as to the Happiness of Men ; and in *this* happy *Mean* there are far more *good* Men than *bad* ; and then the Minds of *good* Men having infinitely the *advantage* of the Minds of *bad*, as to the rendering their outward Condition *happy*, it is impossible that that *ordinarily* and *generally* they must be the more *happy* and *prosperous*.

Secondly, so far as the Maxim, that all *things* happen alike to all, is *true*, it is *no* Argument at all against a Providence ; and that upon these following Accounts. 1. Because many of the *Goods* and *Evils* of this World happen to us not as *Rewards* and *Punishments*, but in the *necessary* Course of *secondary* Causes. 2. Because the *Goods* and *Evils* of this World are in themselves so *mean* and *inconsiderable* that it would be *beneath* the Wisdom of Providence to be very *exact* and *curious* in the Distribution of 'em. 3. Because this Life is properly the state of our *Trial* and *Probation*, and not of our *Reward* and *Punishment*. 4. Because the *Goods* and *Evils* that befall us here are not so truly to be estimated by *themselves* as by their *Effects* and *Consequents*. 5. This *promiscuous* Distribution of things, so far as it is, is very requisite to assure us of a *Judgment* to come. 6. Because the *exact* Adjustment of things is reserved for a *future Judgment*.

I. The *happning* of all things alike to all is *no* Argument against Providence ; because many of the *Goods* and *Evils* of this World happen to us not as *Rewards* and *Punishments*, but in the *necessary* Course of *second Causes*. For in this life good
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and bad Men are so mingled together, that in Cases of Common Calamity what happens to the one must happen to the other without a miraculous interposal of Providence. Thus while God leaves second Causes to their natural Course, how is it possible that War, or Plague, or Famine should distinguish between the good and bad that are incorporated together in the same Societies; and so long as free Agents are left to act freely, wicked Parents will frequently spoil their Constitutions by the repeated Excesses of their Riot and Wantonness; and while they do so, their Diseases, without a Miracle, will descend upon their righteous as well as unrighteous Posterity; and wicked Neighbours, whilst it lies in their way, or serves their Interest, will wrong and oppress the just and unjust without any distinction. But you will say, why then doth not Providence interpose between second Causes and good Men, and miraculously protect them from their mischievous Effects? To which in short I answer, that in some extraordinary Cases God hath interposed, of which there are innumerable Instances both in sacred and profane History; but to expect that he should ordinarily and constantly do this, is very unreasonable, because it cannot be done without giving a perpetual Disturbance to the Course of Nature, which being in the whole most orderly and regular, full of admirable Beauty and Contrivance, ought not to be disturbed and inverted upon ordinary Occasions. For if the established Course of things be wise and regular in the whole, why should we expect that God should be perpetually tampering with it, and interrupting and varying it

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by his immediate Interposals, as if he were *dissatisfied* with his own *Contrivance*, and upon every *Revisal* of this great Volume of the World, did still discover new *Errataes* in it to be *corrected* and *amended*. The Evils therefore which good Men suffer are not ordinatily so *inomentous* as to oblige a *wise* and *good* God to *interrupt* the course of Nature to *prevent* them; and it is much better that *some* violences should be offered to good Men, than that a *constant* violence should be offered to the *Nature of things*; and since God can carry on his good Designs to good Men in a *still* and *silent* Path, and cause all their *adverse* Accidents to *unwind* of themselves, and at last to *clear* up into a blessed Close, is it not much better he should do it this way, than by offering *perpetual* Violence and Disturbance to Nature?

II. The *happening of things alike to all* is no Argument *against* a Providence, because the Goods and Evils of this World are so *mean* and *inconsiderable*, that it would be *beneath* the Wisdom of Providence to be very *exact* and *curious* in the distribution of them. It is no part of wisdom to be *nice* and *curious* about *Trifles*. 'Twas ridiculous *enough* in *Caligula* to employ a *mighty* Army only to gather a great heap of *Cockle shells*; but when he had gathered them, it would have been much *more* ridiculous to have taken a great deal of care to divide them amongst his Soldiers in *exact* Proportions to each ones *Merit* and *Desert*. Now though we look upon the Goods and Evils of this World, as things of *vast* and *mighty* Moment, yet God who sees them with far better Eyes than we, knows very well that they are

but *Trifles* in comparison of those *endless* Goods or Evils we must *enjoy* or suffer in another World, and that it is a very *inconsiderable* thing whether we fare *well* or *ill* this moment, who immediately after must fare *well* or *ill for ever* ; and therefore he looks on it, as he *justly* may, as a thing *beneath* his infinite Wisdom to be very *exact* and *curious* in dividing to us these *momentary* Trifles in *just* Proportions to our particular Deserts ; and did we not strangely *magnifie* them, by looking on them through the *false* Opticks of our own *fantastick* Hopes and Fears, we should be so far from *objecting* against God's *Providence* these *unequal* Distributions of them, and were they more *exact* and *equal* we should rather object against his *Wisdom*, as thinking it a very *mean* Employment for a Deity to be very *nice* and *curious* in proportioning such *momentary* Enjoyments and Sufferings to the Merit or Demerit of *immortal* Creatures. So that considering of what little moment the present *Goods* and *Evils* are which good Men *suffer* and bad Men *enjoy*, they ought rather to be look'd on as an Argument of God's *Wisdom* than as an Objection against his *Providence* ; for he understands the *just* value of things, and knows that the *best* of these worldly Goods are *bad* enough to be thrown away upon the worst of Men, and so expresses his just *scorn* of these *admired* Vanities, by scattering them abroad with a *careless* Hand ; for why should he partake of the Errours of *vulgar* Opinion, and express himself so very *regardful* of these Trifles as to put them in Gold Scales, and weigh them out to Mankind by Grains and Scruples.

III. That *all things here do happen alike to all* is no Argument against Providence, because this Life is properly the state of our *Trial and Probation*, and not of our *Reward and Punishment*. The divine Providence hath placed us here as *Candidates and Probationers* for those everlasting Preferments it designs us hereafter, that so by *training and exercising* us in all those excellent Virtues that are proper to our Natures, it may improve us from *one degree of Perfection to another*, till at last it hath *accomplished* us for the heavenly State; in order to which Design it is necessary that there should be an *unequal Distribution* of things, whereby good Men may sometimes *suffer* and bad Men *prosper*; otherwise there would be no *occasion* for any of our *passive* Vertues, nor any *trial* of our *active*. For Affliction is the Theatre of *Patience and Fortitude*, and *Resignation* to God, and without it there would be no room in the Lives of good Men for the Exercise of those Vertues, which for want of Objects to act on, would *rust* and wax *languid*. Again, Difficulty is the Touchstone of our *Love and Faith and Ingenuity*; but should Providence be always *crowning* the Righteous, and *dragging* Offenders to Execution, such a Procedure would *determine* our Liberty, and leave us no room for the Exercise of our *Faith and Ingenuity*; for then the *Rewards and Punishments* of Providence would be so *sensibly and continually* present with us, and so *urgently* press upon our Hopes and Fears, that it would be impossible for us *not to believe* in God, and next to impossible *not to obey* him; and being thus *forced* to believe and obey, what *Excellency* would there be in our Piety
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and Virtue? What *Charity* is it for a *Miser* to lend his Money upon Assurance of twenty *per cent*? Or what *Loyalty* for a *Traitor* to discover his *Conspirators*, within sight of a Rack. And just as little Virtue would there be in any of our good Works, were there any *exact* Equality in the Distributions of Providence. For then we should never do a good Work but upon the *certain* Prospect of an *immediate* Reward, nor *repent* of a *bad* one but upon the *irresistible* Dread of some *immediate* Punishment. But in this *inequality* of things wherein the good often *suffer*, and the wicked *prosper*, we are left to a *free* and *unconstrain'd* Condition, and whether we are *virtuous* or *vitious*, *devout* or *profane*, it is out of *Choice* and not of *Necessity*. So that now to *believe* and *obey* the sacred Dictates of Religion, is *generous* and *ingenuous*; and our Faith and Obedience is our *Virtue* and *Excellency*, because we believe and obey *without* Force and *against* Temptations and Difficulties.

And as this *unequal* State of things is of absolute Necessity to *try* and *exercise* our Virtues, so it is also very *assistent* thereunto. For that Providence doth *generally* and not *universally* bless and prosper good Men, is a great support to a *wise* and *rational* Belief. For as a late excellent Author hath well observed, if things were *constantly* managed one way without any *variation*, we might be apt to conclude that the World was under the *rigid* Laws of a *fatal* Necessity; if on the other side there were no *Rule* observed, no *Footsteps* of *Method* in the Dispensations of Providence, we might be tempted to believe that *Chance* rules the World; but when we observe that in the manage-

ment of things there is an *Intermixture* of these two, *viz.* that there is a *general Rule*, and that there are *particular Exceptions* from it, we have just reason to conclude that all is under a *free Almighty Agent*, that rules the World according to the *Determinations* of his own Will. As this way of Providence, *viz.* to *interweave* into good Mens Fortunes *Adversity* with *Prosperity*, is in this respect very advantageous to their *Faith*; so is it also to the *whole State* of their *Virtue*; for as on the one hand a continued train of *prosperous Events* would be apt to *bloat* and *elevate* their Minds, so on the other a continued series of *Adversity* would be apt to *sink* and *depress* their Spirits, whilst this middle way of *Interchange* in their Condition *balances* them on both sides, and keeps them in an *even, steady and well poized Temper*. Since therefore this Life is the state of our *Trial*, it is evident that an *Exact Equality* of things would be a much stronger *Objection* against the *Wisdom* of Providence, than all these *present Inequalities* are against the *Justice* of it. For *Hardships* and *Difficulties* are necessary to a state of *Trial*, and were good Men always *blest*, and bad Men always *punished*; this Life instead of being a *Probation* to either, would be the *Heaven* of the one, and the *Hell* of the other; and since some *Afflictions* are necessary to try good Men, and some *Prosperities* to try bad, it would be a strange *oversight* of Providence, when it designs the *Trial* of both, to fix them in such a Condition, wherein no thorough Experiment can be made of either. So that for us to object against Providence for making such *unequal Distributions* in a state wherein it designs our *Trial*, is in effect

arguing against the Wisdom of Providence

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to object against *Wisdom* for acting most *suitably* to its own *Designs*.

IV. That *all things here do happen alike to all* is no Argument against Providence, because the Goods and Evils that befall us *here*, are not so truly to be estimated by *themselves* as by their *Effects* and *Consequents*. For the Divine Providence which runs through all things, hath *disposed* and *connected* them into such a Series and Order, that there is no single *Event* or *Accident* but what is purely miraculous, but depends upon the *whole* System, and hath innumerable *Causes* antecedent to it, and *innumerable* Consequents attending it; and what the Consequents will be, whether *good* or *bad*, is beyond our Skill to *prognosticate*; so that though the Event be never so good or bad *singly* and *apart* by it self, yet in *Conjunction* with all those Consequents that will most *certainly* attend it, the *best* Event for all we know may prove most *mischievous*, and the *worst* most *beneficial* to us. So that for us *boldly* to pronounce concerning the Good or Evil of Events, before we see the *Train of Consequents* that follow them, is very *rash* and *inconsiderate*. As for instance, you see a good Man *oppressed* with Sorrows and Afflictions, and a bad Man *crowned* with Pleasures and Prosperities; and considering these things *apart* by themselves, you conclude that the one fares very *ill*, and the other very *well*; but did you at the same time see the Consequents of the *one's* Adversity and the *other's* Prosperity, it is probable you would conclude the quite contrary; *viz.* that the good Man's *Adversity* was a *Blessing*, and the bad Man's *Prosperity* a *Curse*. For I dare boldly affirm that

good Men generally reap more substantial Benefit from their Afflictions than bad Men do from their Prosperities; the one smarts indeed at present; but what follows? perhaps his Mind is cured by it of some Disease that is ten times worse to him than his outward Affliction, of Avarice or Impatience, of Envy or Discontent, of Pride or vanity of Spirit; his Riches are lessened, but his Virtues are improved by it; his Body is impaired, but his Mind is grown sound and hale by it, and what he hath lost in Health, or Wealth, or Pleasure, or Honour, he hath gained with vast advantage in Wisdom and Goodness, in Tranquility of Mind and Self-enjoyment. And methinks no man, who believes he hath a Soul, should grudge to suffer any tolerable Affliction for the bettering his Mind, his Will, and his Conscience. On the other hand the bad man triumphs and rejoices at present; but what follows? his Prosperity either shrivels him into Miserableness, or melts him into Luxury; the former of which impoverishes, and the latter diseases him; for if the former be the Effect of his Prosperity, it increases his Needs, because before he needed only what he had not, but now he needs both what he hath not and what he hath; his covetous Desires treating him as the Faulkner doth his Hawk, his luring him off from what he hath seized to fly at new Game, and never permitting him to prey upon his own Quarry; and if the latter be the Effect of his Prosperity, that is, if it melts him into Luxury, it thereby wasts his Health to be sure, and commonly his Estate too; and so whereas it found him poor and well, it leaves him poor and diseased, and only took him up from the
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Plow; and sets him down at the *Hospital*. In general, while he is possessed of it, it only *bloats* and *swells* him, makes him *proud* and *insolent*, *gripping* and *oppressive*, *pampers* and *inrages* his Lust, *stretches* out his Desires into an insatiable Bulimy, *sticks* his Mind full of *Cares* and his Conscience of *Guiles*, and by all these woful Effects it *inflames* his Reckoning with God, and *treasures* up Wrath for him against the day of Wrath; so that comparing the Consequents of the good man's *Adversity* with those of the bad man's *Prosperity*, it is evident that the former fares well even in his worst Condition, and the latter ill in his best. *It's well for me*, saith good David, *that I was afflicted*, for before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy commandments, Psalm 119. 67. But on the contrary, when the Wicked spring as the Grass, saith the same Author, and when all the workers of Iniquity do flourish, it is that they shall be destroyed for ever, Psalm 93. 7. If then in the Consequents of things good men are blessed in their Afflictions, and bad men plagued in their Prosperities, as it is apparent they generally are, these unequal Distributions are so far from being an Argument against Providence, that they are a glorious Instance of it. For wherein could the Divine Providence better express its Justice and Wisdom together, than by benefiting the good and punishing the bad by such *cross* and *improbable* Methods?

V. That all things here do happen alike to all, is no Argument against Providence, because it is very requisite it should often do so, to assure us of a Judgment to come. For were the Affairs of

this World managed with that *exact* Equality as that the good did never *suffer*, nor the bad escape *unpunished*, we should be deprived of one of the *best* moral Arguments of a *future Judgment*. For as on the one hand should Providence *never* reward the good nor punish the bad in *this* Life, but confound them together without *any* Distinction, it might tempt us to despair of any *just Retributions* from it in the *Life to come*; so on the other hand, were the Goods and Evils of this Life *weighed out* to men in *exact* Proportions to their *Merit* and *Demerit* without any *Inequality*, we might be tempted to think that there is *no need of*, and consequently *no ground* to expect any *Judgment to come*. For what occasion would there be for any *future Judgment* if all things were already *exactly balanced* and *adjusted*; and therefore as to *confirm* us in the Belief of the *Justice* of Providence, it was requisite the same *plain* Instances should be given of its Distinguishing the good from the bad by present *Rewards* and *Punishments*; so to *confirm* us in the expectation of a *Judgment to come*, it was no less requisite that there should be some *Inequality* in the present *Management* and *Distribution* of things, and that the Goods and Evils of *this* World should not be administered with that *exact* Regularity as to prevent the *necessity* of a *day of Judgment*; but that there should be *undecided* Cases enough remaining for a *future Tribunal* to *adjust* and *determine*. So that as in the *present* management of things there is *Equality* enough to induce us to believe a *just* Providence; so there is also *Inequality* enough to induce us to expect a *future Judgment*; God having *wisely* provided in his *pre-*

sent Administration of things, to give us Instances enough of his *just* Procedure towards the good and bad, and yet to leave us Instances enough of *unrewarded* Virtue and *prosperous* Wickedness, to assure us that he intends an *after-Reckoning*. For how can we reflect upon these repeated Examples of *just Reward* and *Punishment*, which in every Age almost God sets before us, and not believe that he *governs* the World? And how can we reflect upon these *manifold* Evils which some good Men *suffer*, and Goods which some bad Men *enjoy*, without believing that he hath appointed a Day wherein he will *adjust* these *Inequalities*, and *vindicate* the Cause of *oppressed* Virtue, and *crush* triumphant Wickedness into *everlasting Confusion*?

VI. And lastly, *That all things here do happen alike to all*, is no Argument against Providence, because the *exact* Adjustment of things is reserved for a *future Judgment*. I confess were God to make no *other* Distribution to the just and unjust, but what is made in *this* Life, the *Inequality* of it would be a *strong* Objection against his Providence; but then considering that this *cloudy* Scene of things will shortly *close up* in a *righteous* Judgment, wherein for the Evils which the good have *suffered* they shall be awarded with an *eternal Happiness*, and for the Goods which the bad have *enjoyed* they shall be doomed to *everlasting Wretchedness*, this is sufficient to vindicate the Justice of Providence were these *present Inequalities* a *thousand* times greater than they are. For suppose that after a short *Melancholy* Dream good Men were to live *happily*, and after as short a *pleasant*

one *bad* Men were to live *wretchedly* but for a *thousand* years in this World ; we might as well object against Providence this *unequal* Distribution of the *melancholy* Dream to the good, and the *pleasant* one to the *bad*, notwithstanding the succeeding thousand years of their *Happiness* and *Misery*, as we do the *Sufferings* of the Righteous and *Prosperities* of the Wicked, which bear far *less* Proportion, to that Eternity of Happiness and Misery that is to *succeed* them, than the *Sorrow* or *Pleasure* of a Moments Dream doth to a Thousand Years *real* Calamity or Blessedness.

For the Providence of God from the *first* to the *last* is all but *one* continued Plot, like that of a *well contrived* Comedy, which at first is very *obscure* and *intricate* ; so that by what is *past* or *present* there is no guessing at the Conclusion ; for all through the *intermediate* Acts *Virtue* and *Honour* fight their way through *Difficulties* and *Disappointments*, and sometimes the *Hero* acts a *sad*, and sometimes the *Villain* a *prosperous* Part, at which the *unskilful* Spectator grieves, and is ready to *damn* the Poet for distributing such unequal Fates ; but then in the *fifth* and *last* Act all the cross Accidents *clear up*, and issue in a *fair* Conclusion ; and in the close of all, the *Hero* is *crowned*, and the *Villain* *hissed off* the Stage. Let us therefore have but the patience to stay 'till Providence hath *finished* its *whole* Plot, and closed up all its *mighty* Scenes in the *general* Judgment of the World, and then we shall see all these *Inequalities* set *right*, and the Fates of good and bad Men determined by a most *just* Award.

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But for us to *quarrel* at Providence *now*, who are yet got no farther, it may be, than to the *middle* of the great *Drama*, and to *find fault* with its Procedure for *crossing* the good, and *prospering* the bad, is rudely to *overturn* the Stage before the *Entrance* into the *fifth Act*, and to *biss* off the *Almighty Poet* for not *compleating* his *Design* before he is arrived to the *Conclusion*. And thus I have endeavoured to answer more *at large* this *Objection* against Providence, because it hath been *more* insisted on than any *other*, and hath more generally *stumbled* Mens Belief of Divine Providence

V. And lastly, It is farther *objected* that the Being of a *just* and *good* Providence, is not to be reconciled with that *wretched* State and Condition to which we behold the *greatest* part of Mankind *abandoned*. For if there were a good Providence that over-ruled the Affairs of this World, how is it imaginable that ever so *great* a part of Mankind as the *Infidel World* includes should be left so utterly *desitute* as they are of the *Knowledg* of *God*, and of the *Means* of attaining the *everlasting Happiness*? To which I shall briefly answer these three things:

I. That the *Infidel World* is not perhaps left so utterly desitute as we are apt to *imagine*; for they have the *Law of Nature* to *direct* them, by which alone they must be *tried*, and *stand* or *fall* at the Day of Judgment; which as to the *main strokes* of their Duty, is so *plain* and *intelligible*, that no *sincere* Inquirer can be ignorant of it; and if when they *may* understand it they *will not*, or if when they *do* understand it, they wilfully *trans-*

transgress, and *violate* it, the Divine Providence hath been sufficiently *good* to them to leave them for ever *inexcusable*. For so far as their Ignorance is *invincible* it is not their *Sin*, nor shall they ever be *accountable* for it, or for any sinful *Omission* or *Commission* thence proceeding, and if they only answer for not *understanding* their *Duty* when they *might*, or for not *performing* it so far as they *understood* it, they can have no reason to complain that they are *hardly dealt with*. But then,

II. As *they* have not those vast Advantages that *we* have of *becoming* good, and *growing up* into the state of *Perfection* and *Happiness*, so proportionably *less* Degrees of *Good* will be *accepted* of those that do *well*, and *less* Degrees of *Punishment* exacted of all those that do *ill*; for that Maxim of our Saviour, *Luke 12. 48. To whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required*, necessarily implies the *contrary*, *viz.* that to whomsoever *less* is given, of him *less* shall be *required*; and if so, it is certain that so much as *their* means of being good are less than *ours*, so much the less *good* God will accept of *them* than of *us*; and as God will accept less *good* of the *best* Infidels, so he will exact less *Punishment* of the *worst*; for so our Saviour himself hath assured us, that it will be more tolerable for *Tire* and *Sidon*, and *Sodom* and *Gomorrha* in the last Day, than for those who persist in their *Unbelief* and *Disobedience* in despite of the *Proposals* of the Gospel. If then in proportion of their present *Disadvantages* less good will be *accepted* of those who make any *Improvement*, and less *Punishment* exacted of them

who

who make *none*, neither the *one* sort nor the *other* hath any reason to complain; and though their Condition were *worse* than it is, yet under these Circumstances it would be fairly *consistent* with the *Goodness* of the Divine Providence. But then,

III. And lastly, Though their Condition were a great deal worse than it *is*, yet it would be very unreasonable for us to *object* it against the *Goodness* of the Divine Providence, unless we better understood than we *do*, how God will dispose of them in the *other* World. Indeed if *Mens Fate* consisted in what they *suffer* and *enjoy* in this Life, we might better judge of Providence by what is *before us*; but since our *main* state is beyond the Grave, whatever befalls us *here* is very inconsiderable, compared with what we must suffer or enjoy *hereafter*; and as for the *present* Disadvantages which the heathen World lies under, they are but very *short* and *momentary*, and if Providence *pleases*, it can abundantly *compensate* them in the *World to come*; and therefore since *yet* we know not what it *will* do, as having no Revelation in the Case, it becomes us to *suspend* our Judgment till the *Event* hath *determined* it.

This we know, that Providence hath *ways* enough, and *time* enough too between *this* and the Day of Judgment, to supply these *Destitute* Souls with all those spiritual *Advantages* in the *other* Life, which for Reasons best known to itself it hath *hitherto* withheld from them; it may if it pleases extend their *Trial* and *Probation* beyond *this* Life, and discover in the *other* Life the Light of the Gospel, to *so many* of them at least as have

have *here* made any tolerable Improvements under the Light of *Nature*, and if they make good use of it, *reward* them accordingly. For though *we* Christians have no reason to expect any *farther* Trial after *this* Life is expired, because we have passed the *utmost* Trial already, yet who knows but God may make a farther Trial of *those* in the other Life, upon whom the *great* Experiment of the Gospel was yet *never* made; and therefore since Providence can *yet* be infinitely good to them notwithstanding their wretched Condition at *present*, and since for all we know it *will* be so, we ought not to object against it its *present* Disregard of them, till we see the *final* Issue of things; for that their *present* Condition is so *bad* is no ground for us to argue against Providence, unless we were sure it would *never* be *better*; because for all we know it may *yet* be rendered good enough not only to *justify*, but to *glorify* the Goodness of God's Providence towards them.

And now to conclude this *great* Argument. Since we see how *necessary* the Belief of Providence is to our being *truly* religious, and what *unanswerable* Evidence there is of the *Truth* and *Reality* of it, what remains but that we heartily endeavour by a *calm*, *fixt*, and *impartial* Consideration of these things, throughly to *instruct* our selves in the *Nature*, and firmly to *establish* our selves in the *Belief* of it; For our Religion must necessarily *ebb* or *flow* according as it is influenced *more* or *less* by our *Understanding* and *Belief* of the Divine Providence, which are the great Principles that *move* and *govern* it. For every Branch of the Divine Providence is an in-

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exhaustible Fountain of religious *Rhetorick* and *Persuasion*, and in this *single* Proposition, that God *upholds* and *governs* the World, there are a thousand times *more* Inducements to Piety and Virtue, than in all *other* Topicks in the World. But how *pregnant* soever it is with Arguments, and how *powerful* soever its Arguments are, 'tis impossible it should prevail upon any reasonable Mind that *understands* not the *Force*, and *believes* not the *Truth* of it; for all the *possible* Access which *outward* Objects have to our Minds, is through our *Knowledge* and *Belief* of them, without which the most *momentous* Proposals are no more capable of *affecting* us, than one of Tully's Orations is of calming the North-wind; but he who firmly *believes* the *Truth*, and *understands* the full *Emphasis* of a Divine Providence, must necessarily be affected by it, if he be but within the *Reach* of *Power* of Persuasion; and unless his Will be *impreguably* fortified against all the *Force* of *Argument* and *Reason*, he will find himself so *besieged* with Motives on every side persuading him to submit to the Obligations of Religion, that it will be almost impossible for him to *defend* himself against their *powerful* importunities. For what Man in his Wits can sit *unconcerned* under the lively Belief that he is in the hands of a most *just* and *gracious*, *all-wise*, and *Almighty* Providence, that is conscious to his inmost *Thoughts* and *Purposes*, and beholds all his Actions with infinite *Complacency* or *Abhorrence*; that hath the disposal of his *Life* and his *Soul*, and of all the Goods he can *hope* for, and all the Evils he can *fear*, and will certainly *reward* him

a thousand-fold if he doth *well*, and if he doth *ill* as certainly pursue him with a dire *Revenge*? This *Belief* carries with it such constraining *Terrors* and *Allurements* as cannot but *affect* all reasonable *Minds*, and finally *prevail* with their *Hopes* and *Fears* against all contrary *Temptations*. Wherefore if we would *fix* the *Obligations* of *Religion* upon our *Minds*, it concerns us above all things to be thoroughly *instructed* in the *Nature*, and *confirmed* in the *Belief* of the *Divine Providence*.

C H A P. V.

Of the necessity of believing divine Rewards and Punishments in order to our being truly Religious.

HUmane Nature is framed to move upon the Hinges of *Hope* and *Fear*, and to be elicited and drawn forth in Action either by the proposal of some attainable Good or Prospect of some avoidable Evil, the former of which begets Hope in us, and that Pursuit; the latter Fear, and that Flight and Avoidance; and accordingly we find all Laws address to the *Hopes* and *Fears* of Men with Proposals of *Reward* and *Punishment*, as to the *Master-springs* and *Principles* of their Action, by which they are moved to do or forbear according as they are required and enjoined. And indeed to give Laws to men without enforcing them with *Rewards* and *Punishments*, would be to leave it *indifferent* whether they obeyed them or no, which is *inconsistent* with the Nature of Laws; for Laws necessarily imply an *Obligation* to Obedience; but what Obligation could we have to obey them, did they leave it *indifferent* as to any Good or Evil accruing from it, whether we obeyed them or no? for if it will be as well for us one way as t'other, what matter is it which way we determine our selves? And this holds good in nothing

nothing more than in the matter of our Obedience to the Laws of Religion, to which our corrupt Nature is above all things *backward* and *averse*; all that spiritual Exercise which those Laws require being quite against the Grain of our *earthly* and *sensual* Inclinations; so that were we not *drawn* to it by the *Hope* of Good, and *driven* by the *Fear* of Evil, to be sure our own *bad* natures would keep us at an *eternal* Distance from it; but unless we believe God to be a *Rewarder* of those that *obey*, and a *Punisher* of those that *despise* him, we have no ground to hope for any *Good*, or to dread any *Evil* at his hands.

For unless we believe that he will *Crown* those that serve him with some mark of his *Favour*, how can we think he is *pleased* with them; there being no *other* way for him to express his being *Pleased*, but by *Crowning* 'em with some *signal* Reward; and if he be *not* pleased with those that *serve* him, to be sure he is not *Displeased* with those that *Neglect* him; and if he be not *Displeased* with 'em, what Reason have we to apprehend that he will *Punish* 'em? Thus the *unbelief* of God's being a *Rewarder* of those that *obey* him draws after it an *unbelief* of his being a *Punisher* of those that *Despise* him; and so on the contrary. For unless we believe him to be so much concerned for his Service as to *punish* those that *neglect* it, we have no reason to think he is so much concerned for it as to *reward* those that *embrace* it. So that the *belief* and *unbelief* of God's being a *Rewarder* and a *Punisher* do by necessary consequence *mutually* imply each other; and unless we believe *Both*, there is no reason we should believe *Either*. And when
our

our Nature is so *averse*, as it is, to his Service; what should *induce* us to *serve* him when we expect no *Good* from him, or *hinder* us from *slighting* him when we fear no *Evil*? And what is there can *bring us home* to God when we are *carried away* from him with an *impetuous* Tide of *corrupt* Inclinations, and have neither *Hope* nor *Fear* to bound or restrain it? So that considering the *Aversion* of our Nature to God's service, it is morally impossible we should ever be heartily *reconciled* to it without being Drawn with the *Hope* of Reward, and Driven with the *Fear* of Punishment.

In the Prosecution of this Argument I shall endeavour to shew,

First, How far it's necessary that our *Belief* of *divine Rewards* and *Punishments* should extend.

Secondly, What *Evidence* there is to induce us to *believe* them.

Thirdly, By what *Means* this is to be *Begotten* and *Confirmed*.

SECT. I.

How far it is necessary that our belief of divine Rewards and Punishments should extend.

- **F**OR to induce us to submit to the Obligations of Religion, it is by no means *sufficient* that we believe in the *general* that God will *Reward* us if we do well, and *Punish* us if we do wickedly.

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For this we may *firmly* believe, and yet at the same time prefer the *Pleasures* of sin as much *greater* Goods than the *Rewards* of Virtue, and dread the *Difficulties* of Virtue as much *greater* Evils than the *Punishments* of Sin; wherefore to render our Belief of divine Rewards and Punishments an *Effectual* Principle of Religion these four things are necessary.

First, That we should believe that God is so far a Rewarder of those that serve him, and so far a Punisher of those that neglect him, as to make a plain and sensible Distinction between them.

Secondly, Considering how *Promiscuously* the Goods and Evils of this World are distributed among Good and Bad men, it's necessary we should believe, That there is a *Future* State of Rewards and Punishments.

Thirdly It is necessary we should believe those *Future* Rewards and Punishments to be such as do *Infinitely* Transcend any Good we can *Reap* by our sins; and any Evil we can *incur* by doing our Duty.

Fourthly, It is necessary we should believe that there is no other way for us to *Avoid* those Punishments but by *forsaking* our sins, or to *Acquire* those Rewards, but by *submitting* to our Duty.

I. It is necessary we should believe that God is so far a Rewarder of those that serve, and so far a Punisher of those that neglect him, as to make a plain and sensible distinction between them. For unless we believe that God makes some Distinction between those that serve and those that neglect him,

him, we shall *confound* Good and Evil in our own Apprehensions, and look upon all human actions as *Indifferent*, and thereby dissolve all the *Ties* and *Obligations* of Religion. For things are in *themselves*, as they are in the *Judgment* and *Esteem* of God, who cannot be *mistaken* in Estimating their Natures; and therefore unless there be some *Distinction* between *Men* and *Men*, and *Actions* and *Actions* in the Esteem of God, they must be all *alike* and *indifferent* in their Own natures. And if all Actions are indifferent in *themselves*, we are *free* from all the Ties and Obligations of Religion; and 'tis left *indifferent* to us whether we will *Worship* God or *BlaspHEME* him. So that unless we believe that God makes some *Distinction* between the *Good* and *Bad*, Religion can have no force *at all* upon our minds.

But now there is no other way for God to *Distinguish* between *Men* and *Men*, but by *Rewarding* and *Punishing* them; because if he make any *Distinction* in his *Affections* between us, we may be sure his *Love* will incline him to *Reward*, and his *Hatred* to *Punish* us; and since 'tis as *Easie* to him to *follow* his Inclination as *not*, since he can *Reward* where he *Loves*, and *Punish* where he *Hates* without any *Disturbance* to his own *Happiness*, what should *hinder* him from doing it, supposing that he really *loves* or *hates*, or makes any *Distinction* in his *Affections* between those that *serve* and those that *neglect* him? So that unless he *Reward* the *one* and *Punish* the *other*, he can make no *Visible* *Distinction* in his *Affections* between them. If he be *Contrarily* affected to Good and Bad men, his *Affections* will infallibly appear in his *Actions*;

but if he use them *alike*, it is plain they are *alike* to him. So that unless we believe that God *distinguishes* between Good and Bad men by Rewarding and Punishing them, we must look upon both as *Indifferent* to him, and believe that he concerns himself neither with the *one* nor the *other*; and if we think it is *Indifferent* to God whether we are *Good* or *Bad*, to be sure it will not be *Indifferent* to *us*, whose natures are so *Biaſſed* with *Bad* Inclinations, which having neither Hope nor Fear to *Reſtrain* them, will Run towards *Bad* Objects without *Rub* or *Interruption*. And what likelihood is there that *we* who are so *Prone* and *Inclinable* to evil, should *concern* our selves in the service of God, whilst we look upon it as a thing *Indifferent* to him whether we *serve* him or *no*?

Wherefore to the *ſubduing* our minds to the Obligations of Religion, it is necessary we should believe that God is so far a Rewarder of Good, and Punisher of Bad men, as to make a *ſenſible* Distinction between them, and demonstrate that he is *differently* affected towards them. For to what end should we serve a God that takes *no notice* of us, that *regards* not what we do, but ſits above in the Heavens as an *unconcerned* Spectator of our Actions? Why should we *croſs* our own inclinations, and *forſake* our beloved Luſts, for his ſake, when it is altogether *Indifferent* to him *what* we do, or *whither* we go, or what *becomes* of us?

II. Considering how *Promiſcuouſly* the Goods and Evils of this life are *diſtributed* among Good and Bad men, it is necessary that we should believe there is a *Future* ſtate of Rewards and Punishments

nishments. For though *sometimes* in *this* life God rewards Good men, and punishes Bad with such *signal* and *remarkable* Goods and Evils as are sufficient Indications of the vast Distinction he makes between them, yet this is *Extraordinary* and besides the *Constant* and *Regular* Course of his Providence, which for *wise* and *excellent* ends and purposes doth ordinarily scatter Good and Evil among men with an *open* and *undistinguishing* hand; insomuch that as the Wise man observes, *Eccles. 9. 1, 2, 3.* *No man knoweth either Love or Hatred by all that is before him; all things come alike to all, there is one event to the Righteous and to the Wicked, and as is the Good so is the sinner, and he that sweareth as he that feareth an Oath; this is an evil among all things that are done under the Sun, that there is one Event to all.* Since therefore God's Love of Good men and Hatred of Bad appears not by any thing *before us*, we must either conclude that they are *both* Indifferent to him, which would be to *Raze* the very *Foundations* of Religion, or that there is a *Future* state of Rewards and Punishments wherein there will be no more such *Promiscuous* Distributions, no more such *Cross coupling* of Prosperity with *Vice*, and Misery with *Virtue*, but all things will be adjusted *suitably* to mens *Deserts* and *Qualifications*; and those that are Good *advanced* to immortal Glory and Honour, and those that are Bad *deprest* into eternal Shame and Confusion. For the Difference which God makes between them in the *present* course of his Providence is too *small* and *indiscernable* to induce us to believe that he makes *any* Difference between them in his *Esteem* and *Affection*; and

therefore either we must believe that there is *another* state wherein he makes a *far wider* difference between them, or conclude that they are both *indifferent* to him, and that he hath no more *Regard* to the *one* than the *other*, or that he hath no *Regard* at all to *either*, which as I shewed before, utterly *dissolves* the Obligations of Religion

III. It is necessary we should believe those *Future Rewards* and *Punishments* to be *such* as do infinitely *Transcend* any *Good* we can *reap* in our sinful *neglect* of *God*, and any *Evil* we can *incur* by our *submission* to him. 'Tis true, were our *natures* equally inclined to *submit* to or *neglect* him, we should need *no more* *Good* and *Evil* to move us *one way* than *'other*; but the *same* *Proportion* of *Goods* and *Evils* which tempts us now to *Forsake* and *Abandon* him, would equally tempt us to *serve* and *obey* him; But alas, this is far from *our* case; for in *submitting* to *God*, we move *counter* to our selves, we *cross* the *Grain* of our *Degenerate* *Nature*, and *run away* from our dearest *Inclinations*; whereas in *forsaking* him, we *row* with the *Tide*, and are *driven on* with an *impetuous* current of sinful *Lusts* and *Affections*; and the case being thus, the temptations of the *one* side *must* be incomparably *greater*, if ever they prevail with us, than they *need* be on the *other*. For men are *easily* tempted to act in *compliance* with their *own* *Inclinations*; and the *smallest* *Goods* or *Evils* that can be proposed to 'em from without, will readily *induce* 'em to do what they have a *mind* to; but to *prevail* with a man to do that which he is extremely *averse* to, to act *against* *Nature*, and live in *defiance* with his *own* *Inclinations*, requires a *mighty* force

force of *outward* temptation; and it must be a very great Good that he will not *lose*, a very formidable Evil that he will not *incur*, rather than enter into any course of action that is *irksome* and *ungrateful* to his Nature. So that unless we believe the *Goods* and *Evils* of the *other* World to be *incomparably* greater than all the *pleasures* of Sin, and all the *sufferings* of Piety and Virtue, there will not be force enough in our Faith to *persuade* us; because *those* future Goods and Evils move *against* Nature, and *persuade* us to a course of life we are extremely *averse* to, whereas *these* present ones *joyn hands* with our Inclinations, and find a ready concurrence in our wills and affections; and a very small temptation will prevail against a great one, when it hath Nature, that *Bosome* Orator, to *solicite* and *plead* for it. Wherefore unless we believe the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of the *future* state to be such as *infinitely* outweigh *those* present Goods and Evils that tempt us to sin, they will never be able to prevail against 'em; because they must not only out-tempt *them*, but, which is the much harder task of the two, they must out-tempt the *Reluctances* of our *Degenerate* Nature; and yet for future Goods and Evils to out-tempt present ones is not so *easy* a matter neither; especially if *those* future ones are *invisible* and out of the Ken of our *sense*, which is the case here. For *Futurity* lessens all Objects to the *Mind*, even as *distance* doth to the *Eye*, and makes things appear to us much *smaller* than they are in their *own* natures; So that the *Futurity* of the Rewards and Punishments of the *other* life, are a mighty *disadvantage* to 'em when they stand in competition with *present* Goods and

Evils ; because the *latter* appear to us in their *full* Proportion, and Magnitude, with *all* their tempting circumstances about 'em, whereas the *former*, exhibit to us a *dim* and *confused* Landskip of things *afar off*, of things which we never *saw* nor *felt*, and which by reason of their *distance* imprint very *dark* Ideas on our minds. And as their *Futurity* lessens their appearance, and renders it *confused* and *indistinct*, so their *Invisibilty* weakens their force and influence on our minds, which no Objects can so *nearly* affect as those that strike upon our *Senses*. So that unless by an *immense* magnitude they *compensate* for being *future* and *insensible*, it is impossible they should prevail with such minds as *ours* against *present* and *sensible* Goods and Evils. Wherefore to render our belief of a Future State *effectual* to reduce us to God and our Duty, it's *absolutely* necessary we should believe the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of it to be *infinitely* greater than all the *Goods* and *Evils* that can tempt us to Sin; and that not only because our natures are extremely *averse* to that which *these* Rewards and Punishments tempt us to, but because the Goods and Evils which tempt us the *contrary* way have the *prevailing* Advantages of being *present* and *sensible*.

IV. And lastly, It is necessary we should believe that there is no *other* way for us to *acquire* these Rewards or *avoid* these Punishments, but by *submitting* to the Obligations of Religion. For to be thoroughly *convinced* and *persuaded* of the *immense* Rewards and Punishments of the *other* life, is by no means *sufficient* to reduce us unto God, so long as we do but *Dream* of any *possible* way to
obtain

obtain those Rewards and to *avoid* those Punishments *without* submitting to *Him*, to which above all imaginable ways our *corrupt* Nature hath the greatest *Antipathy*. So that though we were never so much *convinc'd* of the absolute necessity of *escaping* Hell and *purchasing* Heaven, yet if at the same time we have a prospect of any *other* way or means of effecting it, to be sure we shall shun *this*, this most *ungrateful* one of *forsaking* our Sins and *returning* to God. And if *listing* our selves into Godly Parties, or putting on a *demure* and *sanctified* countenance; if being *moped*, *dejected* or *unsociable*; if *whining* or *fasting*, or long prayers, or an *affected* Club, or *rigid* observance of holy Time; if consuming our lives in a *barefooted* Pilgrimage, or *wearing* a hair Shirt, or *whipping* our Bodies, or *spending* our Estates on *Masses* and *Indulgencies*; if being made free of a *holy* Confraternity, or *visiting* Altars and Shrines, or *numbering* Prayers, like Faggots by a *Tally* of *Beads*, if these or any of these will but secure us of *Heaven* and from going to *Hell*, we shall think them a thousand times more *tolerable* and *easy* than to *submit* our wills to God in all the instances of true *Piety* and *Virtue*; in the doing of which we must *strangle* the corrupt inclinations of our Nature, *tear* our beloved Lusts from our hearts, *rack off* our earthly affections from their Lees, and *refine* and *spiritualize* 'em into a divine *Zeal*, and *Love* and *Devotion*, than which there is nothing in the World more *irksome* to a *degenerate* nature. So that 'till we are reduc'd to an utter *despair* of *reaping* the Rewards and *escaping* the Punishments of the other Life by any
other

other means than *this* of submitting our selves to the Obligation of Religion, our faith will be altogether ineffectual.

SECTION II.

What Evidence there is to induce us to believe these future Rewards and Punishments.

THAT there are future Rewards and Punishments is a Doctrine universally assented to by all Ages, and Nations, and Religions, and there is scarce any first Principle in Philosophy, in which Mankind are more generally agreed. Thus among the Heathen Poets, Divines and Philosophers, there is an unanimous acknowledgment of these future States, although their descriptions of them are generally nothing but the dreams of an extravagant Fancy. For so as Josephus observes, speaking of the Essenes Doctrine concerning the future State of the blessed, *ταῖς αὐτῶν ἀγαθῶν ψυχῶν ὁμοδοξοῦντες πάντων Ἑλλήνων*, &c. i. e. they teach, as all the Greek Nations also do, that for good Souls there are blessed Seats prepared beyond the Ocean in a Region that is always free from Rain and Snow, and excessive heats, being perpetually fanned with gentle breases from the Ocean; which description he hath translated almost verbatim out of the 4th. Book of Homer's *Ulysses*; where he brings in Proteus thus bespeaking Menelaus ——— *σεῖς ἡλύσιον πρῶτον --- καὶ πείεσθαι γαίην*, &c. i. e. The Gods shall send thee

thee to the Fields of Elysium which lie on the utmost parts of the Earth, where thou shalt live secure and happy, there being neither Rain, nor Snow, nor Winter, but the blessed Inhabitants are perpetually refreshed with the gentle breathing of cool Zephyrs from the Ocean. Plato tells us of an easie Law concerning Men. Καὶ αἰεὶ καὶ νῦν ἐπὶ ὄντι ἐν θεοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἡ μὲν δίκαιος τὸν βίον διαλόντα καὶ ὁσίως, ἔπειθ' αὖτε πελευπῶσι, εἰς μακάρων νύκτας ἀπύοντα, οἰκεῖν ἐν πόσῃ εὐδαιμονίᾳ ἐκτὸς κακῶν, τὸν δ' αὖ ἀδίκως καὶ ἀθέως εἰς τὸ τῆς πόσεως καὶ δίκης δεσμώτιον, ὃ ὃ τὰς τὰς καλῶν, ἵνα, i. e. which was always and is still in force among the Gods, that those who lived just and holy lives should after their death go into the Isles of the blessed, where they should enjoy all manner of happiness without the least intermixture of misery; but that those who lived here unjustly and ungodly should be sent into that Prison of just punishment, which is called Hell, Plat. Gorg. p. 312. Thus also Tully Tuscul. lib. 1. permanere animos arbitramur consensu nationum omnium, i. e. We believe, as all Nations do, that the Souls of Men do survive their Bodies; and to name no more, Seneca Epist. 117. tells us, Cum de animarum æternitate differimus, non leve momentum apud nos habet consensus omnium aut Timentium inferos, aut Colentium, i. e. When we discourse of the Eternity of Souls, the general consent of all Men either fearing or worshipping the Hellish powers is of very great moment. And indeed this belief of the future states being so generally imprinted on Mens minds is a very probable argument of the reality of them, it being hardly conceivable, how the Reason of all Mankind should have so unanimously consented in it,

it, had it not been *extremely* agreeable to the *make and frame* of our minds; and we cannot suppose any *false* proposition to be agreeable to the frame of our mind, without reflecting *dishonourably* upon the *truth* of him that framed it. And indeed this notion of a future state is such as hath been generally imbraced by *those* Persons who are *least* capable of deducing it by a *Logical* dependence of *one* thing upon *another*, and therefore since it hath no *dependency* in their minds on any other *antecedent* notion, how could it have been so *generally* entertain'd, did not the *common* dictate of Nature or Reason, acting *alike* in all Men, move 'em to *conspire* in it, though they knew not one anothers minds? For it hath been believed with a kind of *repugnancy* to *sense*, which discovers all things round about it to be *mortal*, and which upon that account would have been too apt to have seduced *ruder* minds into a disbelief of any *other* state; had not some more *powerful* impression on their Souls *forcibly* urg'd them to believe it.

But because this Argument drawn from *universal consent* is liable to some little exception, I shall not *insist* upon it, but endeavour to prove the reality of this future state of Rewards and Punishments from these Topicks:

First, From the *Wisdom* of God's Government.

Secondly, From the *Justice* of his Providence.

Thirdly, From the *natural capacity* of our Souls to *survive* our Bodies, and to *enjoy* future Rewards, and *suffer* future Punishments.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, From the *natural expectance* we have of future Rewards, and *dread* of future Punishments.

Fifthly, From the excellent *frame and structure* of humane Nature.

Sixthly, From the *Testimony* of the *Christian Religion*.

I. From the *Wisdom* of God's Government. That *Mankind* is under the Government of God, is evident from that Law which he hath *imprinted* on our nature, by which our actions are *distinguished* into *Good* and *Evil*, *Virtuous* and *Vicious*; of which sufficient proof hath been given, *Chap. 1.* and since God hath given a Law to our natures, there is no doubt to be made but he hath taken sufficient care to *inforce* the observance of it by *Rewards* and *Punishments*, otherwise his Government over us would be very *insecure* and *precarious*. For that *Law giver* doth only *Petition* his Subjects to *obey*, who doth not *promise* such *rewards* and *denounce* such *Penalties* as are sufficient to *oblige* 'em thereunto.

But now there is no *Reward* can be sufficient to oblige us to *obey*, which doth not abundantly *compensate* any *loss* or *evil* we may *sustain* by our *obedience*; no *punishment* sufficient to *deter* us from *disobeying*, that doth not far *surmount* all the *Benefits* and *Pleasures* which we can hope to *reap* from our *Disobedience*; But unless there be a *future* state, the Law of Nature can propose no such Rewards and Punishments to us. For if we have nothing to *dread* or *hope* for beyond the *Grave*, our *present* interest is *all* our concern, and in reason

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we ought to judge things to be *Good* or *Evil*, according as they *promote* or *obstruct* our *temporal* happiness. Now though it is certain that in the *general* there is a *natural* good accreving to us from all *virtuous* actions; as on the contrary a *natural* evil from all *vitious* ones; and it is *ordinarily* more conducive to our *temporal* Interest to *obey* than to *disobey* the Law of our *Natures*; yet there are a world of *instances* wherein *Vice* may be more *advantageous* to us than *Vertue*, *abstracted* from the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of *another* life. It is *ordinarily* better for me to be an *honest* Man than a *Knave*; it is more for my *Reputation* and *usually* for my *Profit* too; and it is more for the *publick* good in which my *own* is involved; but yet in *several* circumstances it may be better for me with respect only to *this* World to be a *Knave* than an *honest* Man. For whensoever I can cheat so *secretly* and *securely* as not to fall under the *publick* lash nor impair my *reputation*, and I can gain more by the *Cheat* than I shall lose in the damage of the *Publick*, it will be doubtless more *advantageous* for me as to my *worldly* interest to *cheat* than to be *honest*; and how often such *fair* opportunities of *cozenage* do occur, no Man can be insensible that hath but the *least* insight into the affairs of the World. So that if there were no *future* Rewards and Punishments, this great Law of *Righteousness* would not have force enough *universally* to oblige us; because there are a world of instances wherein we might gain more good and *eschew* more evil by doing *unrighteously*, than all its *present* Rewards and Punishments do amount to. And the same may be said of all
other

other laws of Nature, which without the great motives of future happiness and misery can no longer induce Men to obey 'em than it is for their temporal interest to do so. For suppose I can secretly stab or poison a Man whom I hate or dread, or from whose death I may reap any considerable advantage, what should restrain me from it? If you say the Law of Nature, pray what Reward doth the Law of Nature propose that is sufficient to compensate for the dissatisfaction of my Revenge, or for the danger I run in suffering my Enemy to live; or what Punishment doth the Law of Nature denounce that can ballance the advantage of a thousand, or perhaps ten thousand pounds a year that may accrew to me by his death?

If you say the Law of Nature proposes to me the reward of a quiet and satisfied mind, and denounces the punishment of a guilty and amazed Conscience; I easily answer, that this peace and horror, which is consequent to the forbearance or commission of sin, arises from the hope and dread of future Rewards and Punishments; which being taken away, to sin or not sin will be indifferent as to any peace or horror that can follow upon it; and when this restraint is taken off what consideration will there be left that is sufficient to withhold me from the bloody fact, when ever I have an opportunity to act it securely, and am furiously spurred on to it by my own Revenge and Covetousness? So that if there be no Rewards and Punishments in another life to enforce the commands of the Law of Nature, it's certain that there are no such annex'd to it in this as are universally sufficient to oblige us to observe 'em. For as for the Goods and Evils of this life

life, they are *ordinarily* distributed among men with so little *respect* and *discrimination*, as not only to *occasion* but to *justify* that famous observation of the Wise man, that *all things happen alike to all*. Either therefore there are *other* Goods to be hoped for, and *other* Evils to be feared, or there are a World of *cases* wherein God hath not *sufficiently* provided to *secure* our obedience to the *Law* of our *Nature*; and to imagine that God should *give* a *Law* to his *Creatures*, and take no care to *secure* the *Authority* of it is a most *senseless* Blasphemy of the *Wisdom* of his *Government*; for this would be to *expose* his own *Authority* to *contempt*, and to *cast* his *Laws* at the *feet* of his *Creatures* to be *spurned* and *trampled on* by 'em at their pleasure.

If it be objected, that all that this Argument proves, is, that to *secure* our *obedience* to the *Law* of *Nature*, it's *necessary* we should *believe* that there are future *Rewards* and *Punishments*; but that it doth not hence follow that 'tis *necessary* that there should be future *Rewards* and *Punishments*; because whether there be any such things or no, our *belief* of 'em will be *sufficient* to *secure* the *Authority* of the *Law*; I Answer, That if our *belief* of future *Rewards* and *Punishments* be *necessary*, one of these two things must inevitably follow; either that the *Objects* of our *Belief* are *real*, which is the thing I am proving; or that to *countenance* the *Authority* of his *Laws*, it's *necessary* for God to *impose* upon our *faith*, and *deceive* us into the belief of *falsehood*. For if to *inforce* God's *Law*, it's *necessary* we should *believe* that there are future *Rewards* and *Punishments*,
either

either there must *be* such things *really existing*, or God must inforce his Law with *our* belief of a falshood; and to imagine, that when God *might* have created for us a *future* state of Reward and Punishment, if he had *so pleased*, and governed us by the *hopes* and *fears* of it, he hath rather chosen to govern us by *Tricks* and *Lyes*, and to *wheelde* us into obedience by a *cheat* and *delusion*, is a Blasphemy no less *sensless* than *horrid*. Since therefore to *secure* the Authority of that Law by which the humane Nature is to be governed, it is necessary that it should be *inforc'd* with the motives of *everlasting* Reward and Punishment, one of these three things *necessarily* follows; either that God hath not *sufficiently* inforc'd his Law, which is a *soul* imputation on his *Wisdom*, or that he is *fain* to inforce it with a *Lye*, which is an *impious* reflection on his *Truth*, or that there *are* everlasting Rewards and Punishments.

II. From the *Justice* of the divine *Providence*. For if there *be* a divine *Providence* presiding over the world (as, that there *is*, hath been already sufficiently proved) *Justice* and *Equity*, which is the most *glorious* perfection of an *Over-ruling* power, must necessarily be *included* in the notion of it. For without *Justice*, over-ruling power is nothing but an *impotent Tyranny*, which to attribute to God is far more *dishonourable* and *incongruous* to the nature of his perfections, than to strip him of *all* Providence, as *Epicurus* did, and *shut* him up in the heavens in a State of everlasting *Sloth* and *Luxury*. For *not* to Govern, is only to *do Nothing*; but to Govern without *Justice*, is to *do Mischief*; and 'tis a much less Derogation from

the Perfection of any Being, to suppose it to be *Idle* than to suppose it to be *Mischievous*. So that allowing that God, who is the most *perfect* of all Beings, governs the World, it would not be only *Blasphemous*, but *Nonsense* to imagine that he governs it *unjustly*. Now the proper *justice* of Government consists in the *Equality* of its *Distributions*; for since there is such a thing as *immutable* Good and Evil in the actions of *free* and *reasonable* Agents; it is naturally *fit* and *due*, that those who do good should receive good, and those who do evil, evil, from *their* hands who have the Government of actions; and this *proportionable* to the good and evil of their doings. So that God's Governing the world *justly*, consists in *Distributing* good to those that do good, and evil to those that do evil; or in other words, in *Proportioning* Rewards and Punishments to men according to the Good and Evil he finds in their actions; and unless we suppose him to do *this*, it is *nonsense* to imagine that he Governs the World.

But if all his Distributions are confined to *this* life, and there is neither Reward nor Punishment to be expected from him in *another*, there are *infinite* instances of his Providence wherein it will be impossible to defend his *equality* and *justice*. For if there be no other Scene of good and evil, Reward and Punishment, but only *this* life, all the *afflicted* good and *prosperous* bad men that ever were in the World, of which their *infinite* instances, are so many *reproachful* Monuments of the *woful* inequality of the divine Government. For how many Millions of *brave* Souls have there been, who have thought nothing too *dear* for God and his service,

service, and have *sacrificed* their lusts, their lives and their fortunes to him, and yet upon *this* supposal have reaped no other *recompence* for so doing but only a *miserable* life, and a *woful* death, and an obscure *dishonourable* grave? As, on the contrary, how many Millions of Millions of *wicked* men that have lived in open *defiance* to all that is sacred, and just, and good, *blasphemed* God, *assaulted* his Authority, and *trampled* upon all the Laws of his Government, and yet, supposing there is no *other* life, have undergone no *other punishment* for so doing but to live *prosperously*, and die *quietly*, and lie *inscribed* in a Marble Monument? Now how can we otherwise *Apologize* for the *justice* of Providence when it thus *cross-couples* Prosperity with Vice, and Adversity with Virtue, but only by supposing this *present* life to be only the State of our *Trial* and *Probation*, which will quickly *determine* in our *everlasting* Recompence or Punishment, according as we *behave* and *acquit* ourselves in it; upon which supposal the *justice* of Providence may be fairly *accounted for*, were the *present* distributions of it a thousand times more *unequal* than they are? For *then* we need not wonder that good and bad Men are at *present* so *unequally* treated, since *now* they are only upon their *Proof* and *Trial*, which, as I have shewn before, requires *such* a treatment; but their *Reward* and *Punishment* is reserved for *another* state, wherein all these *seeming* inequalities shall be fairly *adjusted*, and Virtue shall be *crowned* with everlasting *Glory* and *Pleasure*, and Vice *damn'd* to eternal *horror* and *confusion*. But if the Goods and Evils of this *present* life, are *all* the reward and punishment that

good and bad Men are to expect, where is the *Justice* of the Divine Government, that many times *oppresses* its Friends, and *advances* its Enemies, and in the conclusion *extinguishes* their Beings *together*, and therewith all *possibility* of making any future *retribution* of good to the one, or evil to the other? And therefore if it be *true*, that the *Judge of all the World will do righteously*, that *first or last* he will certainly distribute his Rewards and Punishments to his Subjects according to the *Merit and Demerit* of their actions, it must be as true, that for the *main* he hath *reserved* the doing it to a future state; since it cannot be denied but that at *present* he very often doth the quite *contrary*: and if it be but as evident that there is *such* a future state, as it is that God governs the World *justly*, I think 'tis as *fair* an assurance of it as any *modest* man can require.

III. From the *natural capacity* of our Souls to *survive* our Bodies, and *enjoy* future Rewards, and *suffer* future Punishments, it also follows that there is a future state of Reward and Punishment. For we find in our souls a certain innate *force and power*, whereby they *determine* themselves which way they *please* in their *motions and operations*; whereby they are exempt from the *necessitating* influence of any thing that is *foreign* to 'em; and this innate *liberty of power of self determination* is necessarily supposed in the management of all humane Affairs; in *Commerce and Treaties*, in *Government and Laws and Administrations of Justice*, in *Councils, Admonitions, Reproofs and Persuasions*: in all which applications are made to our Souls as to *free and self-determining Agents*, that have
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the *absolute* disposal of their *own* motions, and can *direct* 'em which way they *please*; and indeed were not our Souls left to their own *free* disposal, but *concluded* by the Laws of a *fatal* necessity, as we see all *material* Agents are, such Applications to 'em as *these*, would be very *absurd* and *ridiculous*, and we may as reasonably hope to *tame* Wolves and Tygers by reading *Ethicks* to 'em, or to *still* the North-wind by sending *Ambassadors* to him to propose Articles of Peace, as to *prevail* upon Mens minds by *moral* addresses and persuasions; because if they are not *masters* of their own *choices*, whatsoever the rigid Laws of *necessity* determine 'em to, they must necessarily *choose* in despite of all *persuasions* to the contrary.

Now by this *self-determining* Power our Souls do evidently manifest themselves to be *immaterial* substances, and consequently not liable to *Death* and *Corruption*. For if they were *matter* they would be moved like *matter*, *i. e.* by the *pressure* or *thrusting* of other matter upon 'em; and it would be no *more* in their power to move any *other* way than that which some other matter *presses* and *impels* 'em, than it is for a stone not to move *upwards* when 'tis *impel'd* by the force which your Arm *impresses* on it, and not to move down again when that force is *spent*, and 'tis *prest back* by its own *weight* and *gravity*. Whereas we feel in our Soul an *innate* power to *determine* it self which way it *pleases*, and even to move quite *contrary* to all *foreign* impressions. For when 'tis *prest* on by *outward* Objects, to such and such *thoughts* and *purposes* with all imaginable *wigour*, it often *seems* the impetuous Tide, and *thinks* and *purposes* the

quite *contrary*. How then can that be *matter* which is not *determined* in its motions by *matter*, but when it *pleases* can either move counter to *all* material impressions, or of *two* material impressions can move counter to the *strongest*?

That our Souls therefore are *immaterial*, is just as evident as that they have *liberty of will*; and that they have liberty of will, needs no other proof than the common *sense* and *feeling* of Mankind; and whatsoever essence *feels* this freedom *within* it self, whereby it is absolved from the *rigid* Laws of *matter*, may with all the reason in the World conclude it self *immaterial*; and if our Souls are immaterial substances, to be sure they can *naturally* subsist and live *without* these Bodies, and must *necessarily* do so unless God *destroys* them; as having no *contrary* qualities or *divisible* parts, no principles of *death* or *corruption* in 'em; and since God hath made our Soul of an *immaterial* and *immortal* nature, we have all the reason in the World to conclude that he will not *unravel* his own Workmanship, but permit it to *survive* its Body, and *enjoy* or *indure* that *happy* or *miserable* Fate which it self hath *chosen* and *made*.

IV. From the *natural expectance* we have of future Rewards and *dread* of future Punishments, it is also evident that there is a State of future Rewards and Punishments. Thus after the commission of any *flagitious* wickedness there *naturally* arise *ill abodings* in Mens minds of a *dire* after-reckoning; and though the Commission be *secret* and *conceal'd* from all humane cognizance, so that there is no reason to *dread* the correcti-

ons of *publick Justice* for it, yet whenever the Man *reflects* on it, it fills his mind with *horrible* presages of a *woful* Futurity; as, on the contrary, when ever a Man doth any *great* good or conquers any *violent* temptation to evil, it *lifts up* his Soul into a *blessed* expectation, and *swells* his hope with the *promise* of a future Reward; and though the good he hath *done*, or the evil he hath *avoided*, gives him no kind of prospect of any *present* advantage, yet his mind is *soothed* and *ra-
vished* with the contemplation of it, which naturally *suggests* to him the *joyous* hopes of a recompence to come. For, whence should this *hope* and *dread* spring up in Mens minds upon the Commission of good and bad actions, but from some *common impression* upon human nature, intimating to us a future state of Reward and Punishment? If you say, 'tis from those *religious* Principles which we *imbibe* in our Education, I would fain know how came this Principle concerning the future state to be so *universally* imbibed, if there were not something in it that is very *agreeable* with the reason of all Mankind? For, whatever is the matter, we see 'tis very *easily* embraced, but very *difficultly* parted with; Mens Minds do *catch* at it with a strange kind of *greediness*, but when once they have *swallowed* it, it never comes up again without *straining* and *voilence*; and what should be the reason of this, if there were not something in it that is very *agreeable* with the natural *tast* and *relish* of our *understandings*? We know there have been *great* Wits and Philosophers that have taken as much pains to *raise* the belief of a future state *out of* Mens minds as ever

any others did to *imprint* it there ; and yet though their Doctrine hath been always highly *b. friend-*
ed by Mens wicked *lusts* and *affections*, to which the belief of a future state is the most *terrible* and *vexatious* thing in the World, yet with all their *Wit* and *Sophistry* they have never been able to *root it out* of Mens minds. If then our *hopes* and *fears* of another World be *merely* owing to our *Teaching* and *Education*, why should not teaching *erase* as well as *imprint* 'em ; especially when it is so *powerfully* seconded with all the *Bosom Rhetorick* of Mens *vitious* inclinations ? Whereas on the contrary, those who have most *industriously* attempted to *extinguish* their sense of another World, have generally been very *unsuccessful*, and though in the *Riot* of their *sinfull* delights, they many times *charm* and *stupifie* it for the present, yet no sooner do they *retire* into themselves and *coolly* reflect upon their own minds, but it presently *awakes* again, and *haunts* and *pursues* 'em ; and though they use all *imaginable* ways to *divert* their minds from the thoughts of *another* world, and, to avoid these *Bosom Accusers* and *Tormentors*, run for *Sanctuary* to all things *without* 'em, to *Sports* and *Recreations*, to *Wine* and *Women*, to *Care* and *Business*, yet still they *pursue* 'em, and ever and anon *break in* upon 'em, and *fear* and *terrifie* 'em ; and because their minds are so *haunted* with these importunate terrors of the *World to come*, they are afraid to look *inwards*, but are fain to live *abroad* in their own defence, as not daring to trust themselves *alone* with themselves ; all which are plain *presages* of a future *Judgment* and *Vengeance* that *awaits* wicked Souls
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after *this* life. For if this dread of future Punishment be *natural* to us (as its sticking so *closely* and *universally* to humane Nature plainly argues it is) it must be *imprest* on us by the great *Author* of Nature; and for him to impress a Passion on us which hath no *real* Object, would be to impose a *Cheat* upon our Natures, and *abuse* our minds with a *false* Alarm. So that either we must suppose that God hath implanted in our Natures a *dread* of that which *is not*, which is a *dishonourable* reflection on his *Truth* and *Veracity*; or that there is *really* a future Punishment answerable to *that* dread.

And as the *dread* of future Punishment is *natural* to us when we do *ill*, so the *desire* and *expectance* of future Reward is *no less* natural to us when we do *well*. For I dare boldly say there never was any *vertuous* Man, of whatsoever *Nation* or *Religion*, or *Sect* of *Philosophers*, whose mind hath not been winged with *earnest* hopes and desires of a *future* happiness, and there is none that ever yet either *denied* or *despair'd* of it, but only such as have first *debauched* the very Principles of their Nature. For such it's evident were the *Sadduces* and *Epicureans*, sects of Men that had *drown'd* all that was *humane* in 'em in *sensuality* and *voluptuousness*, and are *branded* upon Record for their shameful Indulgence to their own *brutish* Genius; and such are no *Standards* of humane Nature, but ought rather to be look'd upon as *Monsters* of Men. And therefore as we do not Judge of the natural *Figures* and *Proportions* of humane Bodies by *monstrous* and *mis-shapen* births, so neither ought we to judge of what is *natural* or *unnatural* to Men by those *brutes* in *humane* shape, who, by sub-

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mitting their *Reason* to their *Passions* and *Appetites*, have *disfigured* their *Natures* and *distorted* it into an *unnatural* Position; But if we would know what is *human* and *natural* to us, we must take our measures from those who live most *conformably* to the *Laws* of a *Rational Nature*; and these are they whom we call *Pious* and *Virtuous*, who are therefore to be look'd upon as the *true* Standards of *humane* Nature, by whom we may best judge of what is *natural* and *unnatural* to us; and if we judge by *these*, we shall most certainly find that *Virtue*, and the *hopes* of *Immortality* are so nearly allied, that like *Hippocrates's* Twins they live and die together. For though while Men live a *brutish* and *sensual* Life, their *future* hopes are usually *drowned* in their *present* Enjoyments; yet when once they recover out of this *unnatural* state, and being to live like *reasonable* beings, immediately they feel great *desires* and *expectations* of a future happiness *springing up* in their minds, and so *arising* higher and higher proportionably as they *advance* in virtue and goodness; which is a plain evidence that these hopes and desires are *natural* to us and *interwoven* with the *frame* and *constitution* of our Souls. But now how can it consist with the *goodness* of God to *implant* such desires and hopes in our Natures, and then *withhold* from 'em that which is the only Object that can *sute* and *satisfie* 'em? For as a great Divine of our own hath well observed, *Other* Beings, we see, have no *natural* desire in *vain*, the good God having so ordered things that there are *Objects* in Nature *apportioned* to all their natural *Appetites*; but if there be no *future* state of happiness refer-

ved for *good Men*, we are by a natural Principle most strongly *inclined* to that which we can never *attain* to; as if God had *purposely* framed us with such *inclinations*, that so we might be perpetually *tormented* between those two Passions *Desire* and *Despair*, an earnest *propension* after a future Happiness, and an utter *incapacity* of enjoying it; as if Nature it self whereby all *other* things are disposed to their *perfection* did serve only in *Man* to make him *miserable*, and, which is more considerable, as if *Virtue* which is the *perfection* of *Nature*, did only serve to contribute to our *infelicity*, by raising in us such *Desires* and *Expectations* as without a future Happiness must be for ever *disappointed*. But if this *Desire* and *Expectation* be *natural* to us, as it evidently is, it must be implanted there by the *God of Nature*, with whose *truth* and *goodness* it can never *consist* to inspire us with such *Desires* and *Hopes* as he knows have no *Object* in the *nature of things*, and so can never be *fulfilled* and *accomplish'd*.

V. From the excellent *frame* and *constitution* of humane Nature, it's also evident that there is a future State of Reward and Punishment. For whoever shall impartially consider the *frame* of our Natures, will easily discern that we are made for much *greater* purposes than to enjoy *this* World, and that our *faculties* are as much too *big* for these *sensitive* fruitions as the Channel of the *Ocean* is for the streams of a *little* River. For the *highest* happiness we can frame an Idea of, is the *enjoyment* of God by *contemplation* and *love* and *imitation* of his Perfections, as I have proved at large, *Part* 1. c. 3. which doth as far excell all
Worldly

Worldly happiness, as the Enjoyments of a *Prince* do the pleasures of a *Fly*; and yet it is evident that our minds are framed with a natural capacity of enjoying this *supreme* Beatitude, *i. e.* of *contemplating*, and *loving* and *imitating* God. For as for the *Being* and *Existence* of God, all things round about us *preach* and *proclaim* it, and which way soever we turn our Eyes we behold the *foot-steps* of his *Power* and *Wisdom*; and being endowed with a *reasoning* faculty, we can easily *ascend* to the *infinite* Perfections of his Nature by those *borrowed* Perfections we behold in his *Creatures*, which are so many lively *Comments* and *Paraphrases* upon him, and so far forth as they are Perfections, must necessarily *meet* and *concenter* in him; and then such is the frame of our natures, that from the *contemplation* of the *Beauty* and *Perfection* of any Being, we naturally proceed to *admire* and *love* it; so that unless our *wills* be violently *prejudiced* against the *Perfections* of God, our *contemplation* must necessarily kindle our *love* of 'em; and then those Perfections which we *love* and *admire* in another, we are *naturally* ambitious to *transcribe* into our selves; so that being once *inflamed* with the love of God, *that* will be continually *prompting* us to *imitate* him, and *that* will by degrees *mould* us into a fair and glorious *resemblance* of him. Thus God hath *implanted* in the very frame of our Nature a most *forward* capacity of *enjoying* himself, which in the *Perfection* of it infinitely *transcends* all that can be imagined in a *terrestrial* Paradise. And yet though we have faculties that we are sure are *naturally* capable of *enjoying* him

to *Perfection*; of contemplating him without *weariness*, of loving him without *aversion*, of imitating him without *difficulty* or *interruption*; in this *present* state of things it is *morally* impossible we should ever *arise* to it. For our faculties are *clog'd* with so many *sinful* prejudices, *interrupted* with so many *bodily* necessities, *diverted* with so many *secular* occasions, that it cannot be *reasonably* expected even from the *best* Men in the World, that they should in this life *approach* the *Perfection* of the *happiness* of *divine Enjoyment*; especially if there were no *other* life but this, for then it would be *folly* so much as to *attempt* it. For what Man in his *Wits* would ever think it worth the while to spend a *considerable* part of his life in *waging War* with himself, *mortifying* his *Affections*, *crossing* and *starving out* his dearest inclinations (which yet he *must* do 'ere he can arrive to any *comfortable* degree of *divine Enjoyment*) if there were no *other* recompence to be expected *at last*, but to live a few days *longer* in a *Rapturous Muse*, and then lie down in everlasting *darkness* and *insensibility*. Were he not a thousand times better *please* and *gratify* himself at present, *content* his craving *desires* with the goods that are before him, and take his *fill* of those *sensual delights* that readily *offer* themselves to his *Enjoyment*, than *run away* from 'em in a *long* and *wearisom* quest of *spiritual* joys, which for all he knows he may never *arrive to*, or if he *doth*, is sure within a *few* moments to be *deprived* off for ever? So that if there be no *other* state but *this*, it's plain we are made *naturally* capable of the *highest* happiness to *no purpose*, we are na-

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turally capable of *enjoying* God, and yet such are our circumstances in *this* present state, that if there be no *other*, it is not to be *expected* we should ever *arrive* to any *high* degree of Enjoyment; and if it *were*, all things consider'd 'twould be an egregious piece of *folly* to *attempt* it. Now how can it consist either with the divine *Wisdom* or *Goodness* to create in us such *vast* capacities of *spiritual* happiness, and then place us in *such* circumstances wherein 'twould be both *imprudent* and in *vain* for us to pursue any *other* happiness but what is *carnal* and *sensual*? No *wise* Man would build a *House* unless he meant it should be *inhabited*; and can we imagine that the *All-wise* God would ever have created in us such *vast* and *boundless* capacities of happiness, merely to *stand empty* and be for ever *uninhabited*; that he who always proposes to himself the most *noble* and *worthy* ends of his *Actions*, would ever have form'd in us such *superfluous* capacities, or built such *spacious* Rooms in our Nature when he never intended to make any *use* of 'em?

And then considering the *Goodness* as well as *Wisdom* of God, what *likelihood* is there that he should create such *ample* capacities in our Nature and furnish it with such *excellent* faculties, for no other end but to enjoy the *trifling* goods of *this* life; that he who hath created goods for all *other* creatures that are every way *adequate* to their natural *capacities*, should make *us* capable to *partake* of the felicities of *Angels*, and then *stake us down* to the pleasures of *Swine*? Especially considering that by making us *capable* of a higher happiness and *sensible* of our own *capacity*, he hath al-

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most necessitated us to *expect* and *desire* it; and what is *this*, if he doth not *intend* it for us, but to create in us an *appetite* merely to *vex* and *tantalize* it; as if it were a *recreation* to him to sit above in the Heavens and behold the work of his own hands spending it self in *weary* strugglings towards him, and *vex'd* all the while it continues in Being with an *impotent* desire of that which it shall never *enjoy*, and which by giving it a *capacity* to enjoy he hath *encouraged* it to *desire* and *expect*.

VI. And lastly, From the *Testimony* of the *Christian Religion* it is also evident that there is a future State of Reward and Punishment; which in most *express* terms assures us of *another* life beyond *this*, wherein we shall be for ever *happy* or *miserable* according to what we have *done in the flesh*; So that we have as *full* evidence of the *reality* of future Rewards and Punishments as we have of the *truth* of Christianity, and as *full* evidence of the truth of Christianity as all the *miraculous* works of our Saviour can give, and as *full* evidence of the *truth* of his Miracles as the most *credible* Testimony of *eye-witnesses* can give, who not only *confirm'd* their Testimony by *other* Miracles of *their own*, but at the last *sealed* it with their *blood*, which is the highest *security* that mortal men can give of their *fidelity*; but though this Argument be of all others the most *convincing* and *satisfactory*, yet I shall insist no *farther* on it in this place, because I shall have occasion to prosecute it *at large* in the seventh Chapter.

S E C T. III.

By what means this belief of divine Rewards and Punishments is to be begotten and confirmed in us.

THough the *evidences* of future Rewards and Punishments be such as are *sufficient* to convince any *reasonable* mind, yet it is evident that in this *degenerate* state of our natures there is a *strong* repugnancy to the *lively* belief of them, insomuch that the *bare* proposal of evidence is not sufficient *effectually* to persuade us; wherefore before we dismiss this Argument, it will be necessary to add, to what hath been said, such *means* and *directions*, as, together with the *evidences*, are proper to *dispose* our minds to the *effectual* belief of the future state; and these I shall reduce to these four particulars:

I. If we would *effectually* believe the future state of Rewards and Punishments, we must *fix* and *inure* our minds to *serious* thoughts and considerations. For whilst our minds are taken up with *fancies* and *levities*, with *wild* or *ludicrous* or *incoherent* Ideas, or entertained with the *cares* or *pleasures* of *this* life, they will not be *at leisure* to turn their thoughts towards *another* World. For to think *close* of another World requires a very *serious* and *thoughtful* mind; because the *other* World doth not press upon our *Senses* as *this* World doth, which wheresoever we turn our selves is *continually* thrusting its *Objects* into our minds

minds through our *Eyes* and *Ears*, and whispering to our thoughts through the *Organ* of our *Senses*, which are the most *immediate* Entries and Inlets to our Mind. So that the other World, being *quite* out of sight, and this *always* in view, it is as difficult for us to keep the one *out* of our Minds as to let the other *in*. For before we can set our selves to think *closely* of the *other* World, we must *shut* our Eyes and Ears to the Objects of *this*; otherwise they will *obtrude* themselves upon us, and *draw away* our thoughts and meditations; we must *gather in* our thoughts from the Objects of Sense that are round about us, *take leave* of this World, and *retire* into our own minds, and *shut up* our selves within our selves, that none of these sensitive things may *come at* us, and that we may be *wholly* at leisure to *entertain* our selves with the *invisible* things of another World. And this we shall never be able to do so long as our Minds are *vain*, and *roving*, and *desultory*, and possess'd with *wild* imaginations, or *restless* cares, or *extravagant* mirth and Jollities; for these things will put our thoughts upon so many *vagaries*, and render them so *loose*, and *wild*, and *incoherent*, that they will never be able to *hang* long enough *together* to form any *serious* conceptions. So that when we would *fix* them upon the other World we shall scarce be able to *gather* them *in* from those outward Objects among which they are *squandred*; or if we *do*, we shall never *keep* them long enough *together* to form any *serious* apprehension of it; but as soon as they have taken a *cursor*y view of it, they will be *flying abroad* again, and *roving* into vanity and impertinence. So that while our Minds are

light and vain, they cannot think *enough* of another World *seriously* to apprehend and believe it; the Rewards and Punishments of that *invisible* state are things too serious for our *wild* thoughts to *dwell on*; and till our minds are grown more *fixt* and *steddy*, till they are more *withdrawn* from sensitive Objects, and more *accustomed* to *retired* thinking, they will be too *volatile* and *fugitive* seriously to *apprehend*, and heartily to *believe* a future state. If therefore we would attain to a *firm* belief of it, we must endeavour to *reclaim* our *wild* thoughts by accustoming our selves to *serious* thinking; and when by *sad* and *serious* meditations we have rendred our minds more *fixt* and *retired*, we must,

II. Endeavour to *remove* those *vicious* prejudices which *indispose* us to the *belief* of future Rewards and Punishments. For while men live in opposition to God, and have therefore reason to apprehend his *displeasure*, this will *strongly* prejudice our minds against the *belief* of a future state; because this belief must necessarily *gall* and *disturb* us, and render our *vicious* courses extremely *troublesome* and *uneasie*. For when a Man is *resolved* to lead an *ill* course of life, and at the same time *believes* it will conclude in eternal wretchedness his *faith* will be a perpetual *plague* to his Mind, like *Belteshazzar's Mene Tekel*, it will *scare* and *alarm* him in his *sinful* Carouses, and *imbitter* the gust of them with many a *sad* thought and *dire* reflection; and till he either shakes hands with his *Creed*, or his *ill Resolution*, it will be impossible for him ever to be *quiet*. Whilst therefore he *resolves* to *continue* his *ill* courses, it is his *interest* to believe

believe there is *no* other World but *this* ; he is *obliged* to it in his *own* defence, and as he *hopes* to enjoy *himself*, and *sin* without disturbance ; and then his interest having *bribed* his *affection*, his affection will be sure so to *bias* his *reason*, that it will be a difficult matter for him to *convince* and *persuade* himself. For if there be future *Rewards*, he knows he hath no *interest* in them ; if future *Punishments*, he is conscious he must *feel* and *indure* them ; and to *believe* that there are such *goods* as he shall never be the *better* for, and such *evils* as he shall be infinitely the *worse* for, must needs be *extremely* repugnant to his inclinations. For that which men would *not* have, they are averse to *believe* ; and that which they are averse to believe they are not easily *convinced* of, because their *aversion* will cast such a *mist* before their minds as that they will hardly be able to *discern* a fair *Probability* in a clear *Demonstration*. Wherefore if ever you would arrive at a *firm* belief of the future Rewards and Punishments, you must endeavour to *dispel* from your minds those *prejudices* against it with which your own *ill* courses are apt to *inspire* you, by resolving with your selves to *lay aside* your sinful *affections* and *interests* while you are *examining* the evidences of another World, and not to suffer them to *intermingle* with your *reasonings* ; concluding that in a matter of such *infinite* moment 'tis the greatest *madness* in the world to *think* as you *wish* and *believe* as you *affect* ; that 'tis not your unbelief will either *extinguish* the joys of *Heaven*, or *quench* the flames of *Hell*, and that since the nature of things will not *bend* to your wishes, and be as you would have them, it is your *true* interest to

believe that they are *what* they are, especially in a matter of such infinite concern to you; that if Heaven and Hell are not *dreams* but *realities*, you will most certainly *find* them so whatever they *think* of them, and that therefore it concerns you as *much* as an eternity of happiness or misery *amounts* to, to *believe* that they are *real* if they are so, lest out of a vain *confidence* that there are *no such* things, you *forfeit* Heaven and *incur* Hell fire. V With such thoughts as *these* you must often *encounter* those *prejudices* which *sin* raises in your minds; and when once you have *conquer'd* them, and *reduced* your minds to an *impartial* desire of being *rightly informed* in this matter, and in order to that, to give an *equal hearing* to the reasons on *both* sides, you are fairly *prepared* for the *belief* of another V World, which cannot *fail* to obtain upon your understandings, if,

III. You *duly* examine those *motives* of *credibility* upon which those future Rewards and Punishments are *proposed*. For though *Faith* be the *gift of God*, yet it is a *gift* which he *confers* upon us as he doth all his *other Blessings*, in the use of *due* and *proper* means; and as it is *the blessing of the Lord that makes Rich*, but not without the concurrence of the *diligent hand*, so 'tis the *grace of God* that gives us *faith*, but not without our application to the *natural* means. Now the *natural* means of *faith* is a *due consideration* of the *evidence* upon which the *matter* to be *believed* is *founded* and *proposed*. For though the *matter* be never so evident in *it self*, yet it is not evident to us 'till we have *duly considered* it; and if we *believe* without *evidence*, we believe with our *wills*,

and not with our *understandings*; whereas in *reality* believing is properly an act of the *understanding*, whereby it *assents* to a thing as *true*, which it cannot do without some *proof* and *evidence* that it *is* so: and therefore when we assent to things as true with our *wills* without our *understandings*, or, which is the same thing, without *proof* and *evidence*, we cannot so properly be said to *believe*, as *not* to *disbelieve*, them. For there are a world of things which men do neither *deny* nor *affirm*, *believe* nor *disbelieve*, that is, about which they never *concern* their thoughts, nor *trouble* their heads one way or t'other. And thus it is here; there are many who *pretend* to *believe* another World, but if you ask them *why*, they can give no *reason*, nor did they ever *enquire* whether there be *any* to be *given*; so that it is plain whatever they *imagine*, they do not *believe* it; for to *believe* without *understanding*, is as perfect nonsense, as to *understand* without *evidence*, or *believe* without *faith*. So that *that* which they call *Faith*, is only *not disbelieving*; whether there be another World or no, they never *troubled* their heads to *enquire*, and so having no evidence *pro* or *con*, their understanding doth neither *affirm* nor *deny*, *believe* nor *disbelieve*, but negligently leaves the matter in *suspense* and *uncertainty*.

The natural *means* of *faith* therefore, you see, is a due *enquiry* into the *evidence* of the *truth* and *reality* of the things we believe; and therefore if we would *indeed* believe that there is a future World of Rewards and Punishments, we must seriously *consider* the *reasons* and *evidences* that *prove* and *assert* it, and urge them *close* to our *un-*

derstandings, till they have forced and extorted from them a *rational* and *well-grounded* assent; which if we do, laying aside all *partiality* and *prejudice*, there is no doubt but they will be found *weighty* enough to *turn the Scale* against all *Objections* to the contrary; especially if,

IV. And lastly, You add to all these means *fervent* and *heartly* Prayer. For Prayer in *it self* is a very *proper* and *useful* means to *beget* and *confirm* in us the *belief* of the other World, because it is an *abstraction* of the mind from those *sensitive* and *material* objects which stand like Hills and Mountains *between* us and the invisible World, and *intercept* our *Prospect* of it. For whenever our mind is engaged in a *serious* and *heartly* Prayer, it *dispels* all earthly things before it, and *scatters* them out of sight, and having no *Mists* or *Clouds* in its way, nothing but a *fair* and *clear* heaven above it, *thither* it directs its *Eyes* and *Thoughts* and *Desires* without any *lett* or *interruption*. Now the very *withdrawing* our minds from *sensible* things to converse with *spiritual* and *invisible* ones, doth, as I shewed you before, mightily *dispose* to the belief of another World. When therefore by *frequent* and *heartly* prayer our minds have been accustomed to *retire* from the objects of Sense, and to *fix* their *thoughts* and *contemplations* upon God, they will be able to turn themselves with more *ease* and *readiness* to the *invisible* things of another World, which the more *familiar* they are to us, the better able we shall be to *apprehend* and *believe* them.

But then, by our *fervent* and *heartly* prayers we shall also obtain the *assistance* of God, without the *concurrence* of whose *grace* we can do no good thing,
and

and much less *effectually* believe the Rewards and Punishments of another Life, which is the *root* and *principle* of all true Piety and Virtue. For to the forming of a *firm* belief of this Doctrine in our minds, there is required a very *severe* and *impartial* consideration of the *Proofs* and *Evidences* upon which it is *founded*; and considering how *vain* and *roving* our thoughts are, how apt to *fly off* from any *serious* argument, and especially from *this* of another World, which is so *offensive* to our vicious *appetites* and *affections*, what likelihood is there that we should ever *fix* our minds to such a *thorough* examination of the *Proofs* of another World as is necessary to *beget* in us a *lively* belief of it, unless God, who alone can *command* our thoughts, *co-operates* with us, and *animates* our *faint* endeavours with his *grace* and *assistance*; unless he by *suggesting* the evidences of the future state to us, and by *urging* and *repeating* them, *imprints* them on our minds with all their natural *force* and *efficacy*; in a word, unless by *following* our *flying* thoughts with the his *holy* Inspirations, and *importuning* them with, and almost *forcing* them upon them, he at last prevails with them to *stay* and *look back* and *consider* and *seriously* to ponder the *weight* and *force* of them, it is very improbable they should ever *abide* long enough upon our minds to *settle* into a *firm* and *efficacious* belief. Let us therefore *earnestly* implore the *aid* and *assistance* of God, and *beseech* him frequently to *inspire* our minds with the *Arguments* of a future Life, and to *urge*, and *repeat*, and *set them home* upon our thoughts, till by a *due* consideration of them we have *extracted* all their *force* and *evidence*, and *digested* it into a *lively*

and *active* belief; and if to the use of all the above-named means you do but add this of *Prayer* and *Supplication*, you may *depend* upon it, that he who hath promised to *open* unto all that *knock*, and to be *found* of all that *seek* him, will never *deny* you any *grace* or *assistance* that is necessary to produce in you the *fundamental* Principle of Religion, *viz.* an *effectual* belief of the *Rewards* and *Punishments* of another World.

To conclude this Argument therefore, since *this* belief is so *absolutely* necessary to *subject* our minds to the *obligations* of Religion, let us endeavour as much as in us lies, to *found* it in our *reason*, by *convincing* our minds of the *truth* and *force* of our *evidences* upon which it is *proposed*. For while we *believe* upon *trust* and we know not *why*, our faith must needs be very *weak* and *infirm*, and like a Tree without root in the midst of a storm, be unable to *out-stand* any *blast* of temptation. For the temptations of *sin* are such *goods* and *evils* as are evident to our *senses*, which do most *certainly* assure us that there are such things in the VWorld as *pleasure* and *profit*, *reproach* and *persecution*; and therefore unless when we are *tempted*, our *faith* can *confront* the evidence of *Sense* with the evidence of *Reason*, and produce good proof of those *future* Goods and Evils which it puts in the balance against these *present* temptations, it will hardly be able to *withstand* 'em. For what likelihood is there that the things which we *believe* without *proof* and *evidence*, should have comparably that *force* and *influence* upon us, as the things which we *know*, and *feel* and *experience*? So that when we come to *oppose* a Heaven and

and a Hell, of whose *reality* and *existence* we have no evidence, to *pleasures* or *profits*, *reproaches* or *persecutions*, which strike *immediately* on our *senses*, it is easie to *prognosticate* which will be most *prevalent*.

But if our *Belief* of the future Rewards and Punishments be *founded* on such *evidence* as satisfies our *reason*, what temptation in the world is there that can *prevail* against it; what *good* is there that can *outbid* Heaven, or what *evil* that can *vye* terrors with Hell? For we see by experience that the *Objects* of our *faith*, when it is grounded upon *satisfactory* evidence, do as *much* influence our minds as the *Objects* of *sense*; they who never saw the *Indies* unless it were in a *Map*, and so can hardly *believe* that there are such Countries, are yet as *much* affected with the rich Merchandizes they abound with, as those who have been *there*, and as ready to venture their *Estates* and *Persons* thither, through the *danger* of the Sea, in hope of a *prosperous* return. If therefore we believe that there is such a *state* as Heaven, with as *full* satisfaction of mind as we do that there is such a *place* as the *Indies*, doubtless our *Faith* would affect us as much as our *Eyes*, and we should be as *forward* to go to Heaven and venture through all *dangers* and *difficulties* thither, as if we had been there *already*, and had *seen* with our own *Eyes* all the *Glories* and *Delights* it flows and abounds with. So that the evidence of our *Faith*, if it be *clear* and *satisfactory*, will as much *affect* our minds as the evidence of our *sense*; and Heaven and Hell will as *vigorously* influence our *hope* and *fear*, if with

a full satisfaction of mind we *believe* them, as if we had *seen* and *felt* them. Conceive then that you had spent but *one* hour in *Heaven*, surveying with your own Eyes the *glories* of that *Place*, the *Triumphs* and *Exaltations* of its blessed *Inhabitants*, and the *rapturous* Joys and Delights where-with it *entertains* them; conceive that after this you have been sent for *another* hour in *Hell*, and had there been *spectators* of *horrors* and *agonies* of the damned, or their *torture*, and *rage*, and *dire* convulsions of *Soul*, caused by a *desperate* and *remediless* misery; in a word, conceive that after *all*, you had been dismiss'd into this World again to *choose* your own fate and *determine* your selves to *that* happy or *this* miserable portion for ever; think now what your *mind* and *resolution* would be; whether you would not be willing to *lose* any thing rather than *Heaven*, or to *endure* any thing rather than *Hell*; whether *any* good or evil sin can *tempt* you withal, would be able to *out-tempt* the Rewards and Punishments of Eternity. Doubtless no; the *remembrance* you would have of the *infinite* Joys and *intolerable* Miseries you saw in that other World, would prove an *invincible* Antidote against *all* Temptation. Now what your *sense* of the other World would be if you had *seen* it, that will your *belief* of it be, when 'tis *founded* upon *clear* and *satisfactory* evidence; 'twill be an *infallible* Counter-charm against the most *bewitching* Temptations; 'twill render the *greatest* goods *dreadful* to us that *beckon* us to *Hell*, and the *greatest* evils *desireable* that *drive* us towards *Heaven*. For *Faith*, saith the Apostle, *is the substance of things hoped*

hoped for and the evidence of things not seen, Heb. 11. 1. that is, it renders its invisible Objects as real and evident to us, as our sense doth visible ones; and when Heaven and Hell are become as evident to our faith as sensible things are to our senses, what good or evil is there in all the World that can out-tempt 'em? For what good is there so good as Heaven, or what evil so bad as Hell? So that if our belief of the future Rewards and Punishments be but founded on such evidence as gives a full satisfaction to our minds, 'twill draw our Souls to God like an invincible Loadstone, in despite of all the oppositions of Temptations from without, and of all the counter strivings of a corrupt nature from within; and there is nothing in the World will be able to withstand it; no good or evil that sin can promise or threaten that will have the power to resist its Almighty persuasions, but 'twill force its own way through all oppositions, and like an overflowing Torrent bear down all our carnal considerations before it.

Wherefore if ever we mean to *disengage* our selves from the *slavery* of sin, and entirely to *devote* our selves to God and his Service, let us in the use of the above-named Means endeavour to *establish* our minds in a *firm* and *well grounded* belief of the other World; that so our *faith* being built upon a *sure* foundation of *Reason*, may be able to *out-stand* all the *waves* of Temptation, and to chase all those goods and evils before it that *stand* in the way of our return to God; and when by our *faith* we have so far overcome the *World* as to *submit* and *resign* our selves to God in *despight* of all its Temptations, we shall find our
belief

belief of the other World every day grow and improve upon our hands, 'till at last it *commences* into a *certain* assurance. For 'tis not so much *reason* as their *lusts* that do *object* against the *reality* of the future World; they are *loth* to believe it, because it *disturbs* 'em in their *sinful* enjoyments, and so their *will* employs their *reason* to *argue* against it; and when once their *wills* are engaged in the *Controversie*, a very *slender* probability will weigh more on *that* side than a *clear* Demonstration on the *other*. VVhen therefore our wills are *taken off* by a *free* resignation of 'em to God, all that *sinful prejudice* which renders us *now* so *averse* to believe, will vanish from our minds; and then we shall see things as they *are*, and the *arguments* of another VVorld will appear to our minds with such a *convincing* evidence, as will quickly *dispel* all our *doubts* and *uncertainties*, and render our *Faith* equivalent to a *clear Vision*. So that we shall pass through all the Temptations of the VVorld with the same *constancy* and *resolution* of Soul, as if we walked in *open view* of Heaven and Hell, and these *mighty* Objects which do so infinitely *transcend* all the Goods and Evils which sin can *tempt* us withal, will have as *vi-torious* an influence on our lives as if they were *present* and did strike *immediately* on our senses. And then how is it possible that *any* temptation whatsoever should be able to cope *with* or prevail *against* 'em? For he who is *fully* persuaded of the *reality* of Heaven and Hell, must be utterly *abandoned* of all his *reason*, if he sin for any *Goods* sake that is *less* than Heaven, or for any *Evils* sake that is *less* than Hell. VVhen therefore we

are *drawn* to God by such *invincible* hopes and fears as the *firm* belief of the other World will *suggest* to us, how is it possible that any temptation of sin should either *dissuade* us from coming to him, or *persuade* us to *forsake* him? VWherefore it concerns us to take all *possible* care to ground our faith *well* and *improve* and *strengthen* it, that so in despite of all Temptations it may *influence* our *wills* and *govern* our *practice*, and safely *conduct* us through all the *snare*s of this Life, and at length bring us *home* to everlasting Happiness.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Of the necessity of having right Apprehensions of God, in order to our being truly Religious.

IT is a Noble and Celebrated passage of Epictetus, Ch. 38. τῆς περὶ τὰς θεὰς εὐσεβείας ἴσθι ὅτι τὸ κυριώτατον ἐκείνός ἐστιν, ὁρθῶς ὑπολήψει περὶ αὐτῶν ἔχειν ὡς ὄντων καὶ διοικούντων τὰ ὅλα καλῶς καὶ δικαίως, i. e. *Know that the main foundation of Piety is this, to have right apprehensions of the nature of God, and to be sensible that he is, and that he governs the World well and justly; and accordingly the Psalmist speaking of God, tells us, They that know thy name will put their trust in thee, Psalm 9. 10. i. e. They who have made a true discovery of thy Nature, and by observing as I have done the glorious effects of thy Wisdom and Power and Justice and Goodness, have formed in their minds right and genuine apprehensions concerning thee, will make no scruple to place their whole trust and confidence in thee; which is equally true of all other acts of Piety and Religion. For the true knowledg of God will as much influence our minds to love and adore him, to praise him and submit to him, as to put our trust in him; and hence St. Paul ascribes all the impiety and wickedness of the Gentiles to their not liking to retain God in their knowledg, i. e.*

to their wicked *aversion* to the *true* and *genuin* Notions of God, *Rom.* 1. 28.

In the prosecution of this Argument I shall endeavour these three things.

First, To shew in what *respects* right apprehensions of God are *necessary* to our being *truly Religious*.

Secondly, To lay down *somes Rules* for the *forming* of Right apprehensions of God in our *Minds*.

Thirdly, To *assign* and *remove* the common causes of our *misapprehensions* concerning him.

SECT. I.

In what respects right Apprehensions of God are necessary to our being truly Religious.

IN general, whatsoever is *requisite* to render Men *truly religious* must be *derived* from *true* apprehensions of God, who is the great *Object* of Religion For *Religion* being the *rule* of divine Service must *it self* be regulated by the divine *Nature*, and without a *right* understanding of the nature of God, it is impossible we should *regulate* our Religion by it. Now to the *right* conduct and *due* regulation of our Religion, it is requisite, first, that we should be *rightly* informed what *services* are *pleasing* to God; secondly, that we proceed upon a *true* Principle in serving him; thirdly, that we *direct* our Service to a *right end*; fourthly, that

we be furnished with sufficient *motives* to engage us to serve him; the want of either of which will prove an *irreparable* flaw in the very *foundation* of our Religion, and render the whole not only *infirm* but *defective* in its very constitution. And in all these respects, *right Apprehensions* of God are *indispensibly* necessary.

First, They are necessary to *inspire* us what *Services* are *pleasing* to God.

Secondly, They are necessary to *inform* us with the true *Principle* upon which we must serve him.

Thirdly, They are necessary to *direct* us to the true *end* for which we must serve him.

Fourthly, They are necessary to furnish us with proper *motives* and *encouragements* to engage us to serve him.

I. A *right apprehension* of God is necessary to *instruct* us what *services* are *pleasing* to God. For to be sure nothing can be pleasing to him but what is agreeable to the *perfections* of his Nature, which are the *Originals* from whence the *eternal* Laws of Religion are *transcribed*; unless therefore we know what his *perfections* are, how is it possible we should know what *services* are agreeable to 'em? If you would serve a Prince *gratefully* and *acceptably*, you must inform your self beforehand what his *nature* and *disposition* is, that so you may *accommodate* your self thereunto, and *compose* your actions and behaviour accordingly; that you may furnish him with *fresh* pleasures if he be *soft* and *voluptuous*, and blow him up with *flatteries*, if he

be *proud* and *vain-glorious* ; that if he be *covetous* and *tyrannical*, you may *sponge* and *oppress* his people, and *drein* their *wealth* into his *Coffers* ; if *just* and *beneficent*, you may *assist* and *forward* him in *righting* the injuries, *correcting* the miscarriages, and *alleviating* the burthens of his Subjects. And thus if you would *serve* the great King of the World in such ways as are *pleasing* and *acceptable* to him, you must *study* his *Nature*, and endeavour to *inform* your selves which way his infinite perfections do *incline* him, that so you may know how to *comport* your selves towards him and to *render* him such Services as are *agreeable* to his Nature. For there is no *rule* in the World but only that of his *Nature*, by which you can *certainly* conclude what will *please* him ; and though he hath told you by express *Revelation* what *services* he *expects*, and what will *please* him, yet without recurring to the *rule* of his *Nature*, you can never be *secure* either that what he told you is *true*, or that what he told you was *pleasing* to him *then*, is still *pleasing* to him *now*. For how can you be *secure* either that he told you *truly* what Services were *pleasing* to him, but only from the *truth* and *veracity* of his Nature, or that the Services which were *pleasing* to him *then*, are *pleasing* to him *now*, but from the *stability* and *unchangeableness* of his Nature. So that in our *enquiries* after what is *pleasing* to God, we cannot depend upon his *Word* without consulting his *Nature*, which is not only the *Security* but also the *Test* of his Word. For it's certain that *that* cannot be God's *Word* which *contradicts* his *Nature*, and what *plausible* pretence soever any *Doctrine* may make

to *divine Revelation*, if it *teach* or *command* any thing that is apparently *repugnant* to the *divine Perfections*, we ought for that reason to conclude it an *Imposture*; it being much more possible that the most *plausible* pretence to *Revelation* should be *false*, than that God should *reveal* any *Doctrine* that is *repugnant* to his *Nature*. So that in all our *Enquiries* what is *pleasing* to God, our *last appeal* must be to his *Nature*, which is the great *Standard* of *Good* and *Evil*, by which we are to *measure* what is *pleasing* and *displeasing* to him.

Whilst therefore we are *ignorant* of God's *Nature*, or possessed with *wrong* and *false* apprehensions of it; we must necessarily *wander* in the *dark*, and neither know *what* to do nor *how* to *behave* our selves towards him. For how can we *imagine* what will *please* or *displease* a *dark* and *unknown* *Nature*, whose *bent* and *inclinations* we are utterly *unacquainted* with; but if we are under *false* apprehensions of his *Nature*, they must necessarily *mislead* us in our *behaviour* towards him, and put us upon *false* ways of *serving* and *pleasing* him. Thus if we apprehend him to be a *forward* and *resty* Being, that is apt to be *pleased* and *displeased* with *Trifles*, in *conformity* to our apprehension of his *Nature*, we shall offer him a *trifling* Service, a Service made up of *Pageantry* and *Complement*, of *pompous* shew and *ceremonious* respects and *empty* Formalities; for such a *trifling* Worship is in it self most *proper* for such a *humorous* Divinity. So if we apprehend him to be of an *imperious* and *tyrannical* nature, that governs himself and the *World* by a *blind* and *obstinate* Will, without any regard to the *eternal reasons* of things,

we shall worship him as the *Indians* do their *arbitrary Devils*, *i. e.* follow him with *howlings* and *lamentations*, with *trembling* hearts and *frighted* looks, and *dismal* tones, and by *flattering* him with *praises* and *fawning* upon him with *slavish* submissions and addresses endeavour to *colloque* with Heaven, and *ingratiate* our selves with its *dreadful* Majesty ; for what can be more *agreeable* to such a *tyrannical* Divinity than such a *forc'd* and *slavish* Worship ? In a word, if we apprehend him to be a *fond* and *indulgent* Being, that is governed by a *foolish* pity and *blind* commiseration, we shall not fail to render him a *suitable* Worship, *i. e.* to *retire* and grow *melancholy*, to *whine* and *bemoan* our selves ; to *deject* our looks and *disfigure* our countenances, and *teaze* our Souls into fits of *fruitless* compunction, that so by the *soft* Rhetorick of a *well acted* sorrow we may *pierce* his Bowels and *melt* him into *pity* and *compassion* towards us ; for what can be more *prevalent* with such a *soft* and *indulgent* Deity, than such a *mournful* and *passionate* Religion ? Thus whilst we have *wrongfull* apprehensions of God, they must necessarily *mislead* us into *false* ways of Worship, because we can no otherwise worship him than by *rendering* him *such* Services as are *suitable* to the apprehensions we have of his *Nature* ; and therefore while we think any *otherwise* of his Nature than *it is*, we must necessarily think such Services *suitable* to it as *are not*.

But if we *truly* understand what God *is*, we cannot but apprehend what *Worship* is *suitable* to him, by that *Eternal congruity* and *proportion* that there is between *things* and *things* ; which is as ob-

vious to mens *minds*, as sounds and colours to their *ears* and *eyes*. If God be a Being endowed with *such* and *such* Perfections, every Man's mind will tell him that between such an *Object* and such *actions* and *affections* there is a *natural* congruity, and therefore *so* and *so* he ought to be *treated* and *address'd* to, with *such* and *such* actions and affections to be *served* and *worship'd*. So that if we apprehend God *truly* as he *is*, circled with all his natural *glories* and *perfections*, our *apprehensions* will produce in us such *affections*, and our affections such *deportment* and *behaviour* towards him as are *suitable* to the perfections of his Nature, and we shall worship him with *such* Services as will both *please* and *become* him; with *admiring* thoughts and *dutiful* wills and *God-like* affections; with an *ingenuous* fear, an *humble* confidence and an *obedient* love; with *cheerful* Praises and *profound* Adorations, with *sober*, *wise* and *rational* Devotions; such as will *wing* and *employ* our *best* affections and most *noble* Faculties; For 'tis such a *Worship* only that can *suit* such *Perfections*, and *please* such a *Nature* as God's.

II. A *right apprehension* of God is also necessary to *inspire* us with the best *Principle* of serving him. For it's certain that there is no *Principle* in humane Nature that will *so effectually* engage us to the *service* of God, or render our *service* so *acceptable* to him, as that of *Love*; which will tune our *Wills* into such an *Harmony* with *God's*, that we shall no longer *chuse* and *refuse* according to our particular *likings* or *dislikings*, but what is most *pleasing* or *displeasing* to him will be so to us; and our wills being thus *united* and *subjected* to his, our obedience will extend to *all* his *Commands*,
and

and admit no other *bounds* but his *Will* and *Pleasure*. Whereas if we do not obey him out of *love*, we shall endeavour to *contract* our obedience into as *narrow* a compass as may be, because we shall render it to him with a *grudging* mind, and consequently with a *narrow* and *stingy* hand; for we shall serve him no farther than we are *driven* by *fear* and the *restless* importunities of a *clamorous* conscience, and so consequently fall *infinitely* short of our duty, and take up in a *partial* and *hypocritical* obedience. For while we do not *love* him, it is impossible we should *obey* him with a *ready* will, which is the proper *seat* of his *Empire*; and while we obey him with a *stubborn* and *rebellious* will, we are only his *slaves*, but the Devils *subjects*. Till therefore we do *obey* him, at least in some measure, from a *Principle* of *love*, it is impossible our obedience should be either *universal* or *sincere*.

But to the *inspiring* our Souls with this *Principle*, there is nothing more necessary than *right apprehensions* of God, who in himself is doubtless the most *amiable* of beings, as having all those *Perfections* in *infinite* degrees that can *beget* or *deserve* a rational affection. So that we cannot think him to be any way *otherwise* than he is, without thinking him *less* lovely, and *detracting* more or less from the infinite *beauty* of his *Nature*; For since he cannot be *more* lovely than he is *in himself*, every *false* apprehension of him must needs represent him *less* lovely. But since of all his *Perfections* that of his *Goodness* is the most *powerful* motive and *ingagement* of *Love*, there is nothing more necessary to *kindle* our love to him

than *right apprehensions* thereof. For being *infinitely* good, as he is, in his own Nature, it is impossible we should conceive him to be *better* than he is ; and therefore every *false* notion we entertain of his *goodness* must necessarily *detract* from it, and so much as we detract from his *goodness*, so much we detract from the *principal* reason and motive of our loving him. And therefore in order to the ingaging of our *love* to him, it concerns us above all things not to entertain any *Opinion* of him that reflects a *disparagement* on his *goodness*. For too many such *Opinions* there are that have been *imbibed* among *Christians* as the *fundamental* Principles of their *Orthodoxy*; namely such as these that God's *Sovereign Will* is the sole *rule* of his *actions*, and that he doth things not because they are *just* and *reasonable*, but that they are *just* and *reasonable* because he *doth* 'em ; as if he were merely an *omnipotent*, *blind Will* that acts without *Reason*, and did run through the World like an *irresistible Whirlwind*, *hurrying* all things before him without any consideration of *right* or *wrong* ; That his *Decrees* of *governing* and *disposing* his *Creatures* are wholly founded in his *absolute* and *irresistible Will*, that determines of the everlasting fate of Souls without any *reason*, or *foresight*, or *condition* ; that by this his *unaccountable Will* he hath *impaled* the far greater part of 'em within an *absolute Decree* of *Reprobation*, for no other end but that *Nimrod-like* he might have game enough to *sport* and *breath* his *vengeance* for ever ; and that having *nailed* 'em to this woful *Cross* by this his *dire Decree*, he bids 'em *save themselves* and *come down*, as those cruel *Mockers* did our Saviour,

and because they do not obey, torments and cruciates 'em for ever, though he knows they are not able to do it of themselves, and hath purposed never to enable 'em to do it. VVhich Opinions do represent God in such a formidable dress, circled with such a stern and gastly Majesty, as is more apt to inspire us with horror than love. For though by persuading ourselves that we are of the small number of his elected Favourites, we may work our minds into some degree of love to him; yet when we consider how severely he hath treated the rest of our fellow Creatures, without any other reason but his own Will, this will intermingle such a grimness with his smiles, such a terror with those Charms for which we love him, as must necessarily damp the fervours of our love, and ever and anon freeze it into horror and astonishment, and so fear will be at least the predominant Principle of our Obedience; and while it is so, our Religion must needs languish under great imperfections and infirmities. For while our fear and dread of God is the governing Principle of our Religion, we shall but do penance in all our addresses to him, and every act of our Obedience will be a kind of Martyrdom, so that we shall never be able to entertain any cheerful converse or friendly Society with him, and yet serve him we must for fear our neglect of him should rouse his Vengeance against us; and between this necessity of coming to him, and this fearfulness of approaching him, what can there be begotten but a forced and constrain'd Devotion, which because we do not love, we would willingly leave, did not our dread and horror of him drag us to his Altars. And as we shall serve him with a forc'd Obedience,

dience, so we shall *obey* him with a *sordid* and *niggardly* affection; and while we *grudge* him our Obedience, we shall be most *backward* to obey him in those instances of Duty that are of *greatest* moment and *most* pleasing to *him*, and most *forward* in those that are of *least* concern and most pleasing to *our selves*. Thus while our minds are ridden with *sour* and *rigid* apprehensions of God, *they* still inspire us with a *slavish* dread of him, and *that* will *restrain* and *contract* our Obedience to him. Thus *Maximus Tyrius* excellently represents the Case, ὁ μὲν εὐσεβὴς φίλος θεῶ, ὁ δὲ δεισιδαίμων κόλαξ θεῶ. καὶ μακάριος, ὁ εὐσεβὴς ὁ φίλος θεῶ, δυσυχὴς δὲ ὁ δεισιδαίμων· ὁ μὲν παρσῶν τῇ ἀρετῇ πρόσσει τοῖς θεοῖς ἀνευ δέους· ὁ δὲ ταπεινὸς διὰ μοχθηρίαν, καὶ πολλὰ δέους, δούσελπις, καὶ δεδιῶς τῶν θεῶν ὥσπερ τῶν πονήντων, *i. e.* the truly religious Man is the Friend of God, but the superstitious is his flatterer, and the former is happy, but the latter miserable; for the one being encouraged by his own Vertue, approaches God without any slavish fear and dread, but the other being debased with the sense of his own wickedness approaches him with trembling and despair, dreading him as a cruel Tyrant, *Disser. 4.*

If therefore we would render him a *cheerful*, *free* and *universal* Obedience, we must endeavour to represent him *fairly* to our own minds, and to think of him as he *is*, and as he hath represented *himself* in the holy Scriptures, *i. e.* as a *bountiful* benefactor to all his Creation, and an *universal* Lover of the Souls of Men; that would *have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge*

ledge of the truth, and doth heartily and readily contribute to our eternal welfare; that leaves no art of love, no method of kindness unattempted to rescue us from eternal perdition, and when we have utterly baffled and defeated them all, doth most unwillingly abandon us to the woful fate we have chosen and prepared for our selves; that in punishing even the most incorrigible sinners doth not at all design to wreak and gratifie his own revenge, but to do good to the World, and warn others by their sufferings not to imitate their sins: And in a word, that importunately invites us back when we are gone astray, and upon our return graciously receives us, and when he hath received us is infinitely industrious to prepare us for happiness, and when he hath prepared us abundantly rewards us, and when he hath rewarded us everlastingly triumphs in our Glory and Beatitude; these and such like thoughts are truly worthy of God, and besitting the infinite goodness of his Nature, and as such do earnestly recommend him to our affections, as the most amiable and endearing object in the World; and when by such recommendation they have captivated our affections, and kindled our hearts into an unfeigned love of him, they have inspired us with such a vigorous Principle of action, as will both animate and innoble our Religion, and render it truly worthy of God and our selves; For then we shall serve him with a free and dutiful will, a liberal affection, and a chearful heart, and consequently render him a full, and generous, and willing obedience. For so holy David tells us, *Psal. 119.*

32. *I will run the ways of thy Commandments when thou*

thou shalt enlarge my heart, i. e. when thou shalt open and widen my heart with the love of thee (for so St. Paul expounds the Phrase, 2 Cor. 6. 11.) I shall most readily and chearfully obey thee.

III. A right apprehension of God is also necessary to direct us to the end for which we are to serve him; without which it is impossible we should serve him acceptably. For as a good intention doth not justify a bad action, so neither doth a good action, a bad intention, and unless both are good, neither are acceptable. If I do an action that is materially good with respect to a bad end, I unhallow and vitiate it, and render it formally evil. If I fast for strife, or give Alms for vain-glory, or pray to give a colour to my Rapines and Oppressions; my very Devotion is a cheat, my Mortification a lie, and my Charity an imposture. So that in order to our serving of God acceptably it's necessary we should direct those services we render him to their right and proper end; and what that is we cannot well understand unless we have a right apprehension of his nature; for to be sure God hath proposed that to us for the end of our Worship, which is most agreeable to his own perfection, and therefore unless we have a right Notion of his perfections, how can we rightly apprehend what end is most agreeable to them? As for instance, the right end of our serving him, is that we may glorify him for ever in an everlasting participation of his perfection and happiness; and this we can be no otherwise certain of, than by a true survey and inspection of his nature, which will instruct us that being infinitely perfect as he is, he must be infinitely happy within himself, and so

so can design no *self-end* without himself, and consequently that the end for which he requires our service is not any *advantage* he expects to reap from it, or further *addition* to his own happiness, he being from all Eternity *past* as completely happy as he can be to all Eternity *to come*; and therefore what *other* end can he be supposed to aim at than *our* good and happiness? It is true indeed, he designs to glorifie *himself* in *our* happiness, but how? Not to render himself *more* glorious by it than he is in *himself*, for that is impossible; but to *display* and *shew forth* his own essential Glory to all that are capable of *admiring* and *imitating* him, that thereby he might *invite* them to *transcribe* that *goodness* of his into their natures, of which his glory is the *shine* and *lustre*, and thereby to glorifie *themselves*; and what can more effectually display the glory of a Being who is infinitely *wise* and *powerful* and *good*, than to *contrive* and *effect* the happiness of his *Creatures*, and especially of his *rational* *Creatures*, who of all others have the most *ample* capacity of happiness? Doubtless, the *highest* glory of an infinite *power*, that is conducted by an infinite *wisdom* and *goodness*, is to *contrive* and *execute* the most effectual methods of doing the *greatest* good; and what *greater* good can such a power *effect*, than the *eternal* happiness of *reasonable* *Creatures*? So that *God's* glory and *our* happiness are so *inseparably* conjoyned, that we cannot aim right at *either*, but we must hit *both*, and whether we say that his *end* is his *own* glory or *our* happiness, it is the same thing; for his glory *is* our happiness, and our happiness *is* his glory, and

and when he hath *perfected* our Nature, and *advanced* it to the highest happiness it is *capable* of, it will *shine back* upon him, even as all other glorious *effects* do on their *causes*, and *reflect* everlasting *honour* on that infinite *Power* and *Wisdom* and *Goodness* from whence it was *derived*. Thus *right apprehensions* of the nature of God will *naturally* lead us to the great end which he proposes in all his transactions with *us*, and thereby *direct* us what end *we* are to propose in our transactions with *him*. For that which is God's end ought to be *ours*, and therefore since *his* end is *his own* Glory, or, which is the same thing, *our* everlasting Happiness, it ought to be *ours* also.

But now while we *misapprehend* the nature of God, we shall be apt to set up *false* and *indirect* ends of serving him; as for instance, whilst we look upon him as a *selfish* being, that *centers* wholly in himself, and *separates* his interest from the interest of his *Creatures*, doing every thing merely for his *own sake*, we shall think our selves obliged in all our addresses to him to set aside *our own* interest and happiness, and to aim *singly* and *separately* at his honour and glory; and yet this is the great *Fundamental* of the whole *Scheme* of some mens Divinity, *viz.* That God aims wholly at *himself*, and regards the good of his *Creatures* no farther than it serves *his own* interest; that he made this World out of mere *ostentation*, to *boast* and *magnify* his own *power* and *greatness*; and gives *Laws* to his *Creatures*, and exacts their *obedience* for no other reason but because 'tis for his *honour* to be *served* and *worshipped*; that he created *Hell* only to shew the *power* of his *wrath*

and prepare an everlasting *Triumph* for his *vengeance*; and erected *Heaven* for a *Theatre* to shew himself on, that so having filled it with a vast *Corona* of *Angelical* and *Saintly* Spectators, he might *display* the *glory* of his *Majesty* beforethem, and thereby provoke them to *extol* and *praise* and *commend* him for ever. And while we *thus* conceive of God, how can we hope that he will ever be *pleased* with us unless we aim at the same end that he doth, *i. e.* unless laying aside all regard to *our selves* and *our own* happiness both *here* and *hereafter*, we *intirely* direct all our *worship* and *service* to his *glory* and *interest*; which being impossible for us to do, whilst we have so much *self-love* and so much *indigence* together, will either render our Religion wholly *unpracticable*, or perplex us with eternal doubts of its *truth* and *sincerity*.

And supposing we *could* direct *all* our Religion to *this* end, this instead of rendering it more *acceptable* to God would only render it more *unworthy* of him; for then we should serve him under the notion of his *Benefactors* rather than of his *Pensioners*, with a design to *enrich* him rather than to *be enriched* by him: And what an *unbecoming* presumption is it for such *indigent* Creatures as we, to entertain the least thought of *contributing* to God, or making any *addition* to his *infinite* store? He is above all *want*, being infinitely *satisfied* from the *inexhaustible* fountain of his own perfections; and for us to imagine that he *needs* our Services, and *requires* them to serve his own *interest*, is to *blaspheme* his *All-sufficiency*, and suppose him a *poor* and *indigent* Being, that
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for want of a *perfect* satisfaction *within himself*, is forced to *come* abroad and raise *taxes* upon his Creatures to *enrich* and *supply* himself. For if we serve him for *any* end at all, it must be either to do *him* good or *our selves*; if it be to do *him* good, we *reproach* and *dishonour* him by supposing that he hath *need* of us and our services, which can do him no good unless he hath *some* need of them. So that whatsoever some *high-flown* Enthusiasts may pretend, that it is *ordid* and *mercenary* to serve God for *our own* good, I am sure to serve him for *his* good is *prophane* and *blasphemous*; and therefore either we must serve him for *no* good, or serve him for *our own*; and since he is so infinitely *sufficient* to himself, that nothing we can do can *benefit* and *advantage* him, to what better purpose can we *worship* and *serve* him, than to *receive* benefit and advantage from him; which instead of being *base* and *mercenary*, is a purpose most *becoming* both God and *our selves*? For to serve him with an *intent* not to give to, but to *receive* from him, is to acknowledge his *fulness* and our own *want*, his *All-sufficiency* and our own *Poverty*; whereas by serving him to the *contrary* purpose, we do in effect set up our selves *above* him, it being much *greater* to give than it is to receive; and to make *that* the *end* of our worshipping God, which doth in effect suppose him to be our *inferiour*, is to make our selves *Gods* instead of *Votaries*. What the *true* end therefore is of our *serving* God, may be easily inferred from a *right apprehension* of his nature. For do but consider him as a Being that is *above* all want, that is *infinitely* satisfied in *his own* perfections,

fections, and an *unbounded* Ocean of happiness to *himself*, and then what other end can you propose in *servi*ng him, but to *derive* perfection and happiness from him, in the *accomplishment* of which *he* and *you* will be *Glorified* together ?

IV. And lastly, A *right apprehension* of God is also necessary to furnish us with proper *motives* and *incouragements* to serve him. It is the nature of all reasonable Beings to be *drawn forth* into action by *Motives* and *Arguments* ; and the most *powerful* Arguments to move us *Godward*, are drawn from the *nature* of God, from his *Majesty* and *Holiness*, his *Truth* and *Justice*, his *Mercy* and *Goodness* ; none of which can have their *just* and *full* influence upon us, unless we have a *right* and *genuine* apprehension of them. The consideration of his *Majesty* is naturally apt to *strike* our minds into an *awfull* reverence of his *Authority* ; but if we look upon it under the notion of a *mere Arbitrary* Greatness, that governs not it self by *Counsel* and *Reason*, but by a *blind*, and *absolute*, and *unaccountable* Will, that always chuses and refuses *pro imperio*, without any regard to the eternal *reasons* of things, we may be *astonish'd* and *confound*ed at it, but we can never truly reverence it. The consideration of his *Holiness* is naturally apt to *deter* us from approaching him with *vicious* and *impure* affections ; but if we place his Holiness in a *mere formal* affectation of external *decency*, *respect* and *reverence*, and not in the *immutable* conformity of his Will with the eternal Rules of *Righteousness*, it may move us to be very *ceremonious* and *respectful* to him, as to the *Place*, and *Garb*, and *Posture* of our Worship, but it will never prevail

prevail with us to *cleanse* and *rectifie* our hearts and affections. Again, the consideration of his *Justice* is naturally apt to *restrain* us from *affronting* his Authority by perverse and wilful violations of his *Laws*; but while we look upon it as a stern and implacable Attribute, which nothing will appease and satisfy but *blood* and *revenge*, it may overwhelm us with *horror* and *despair*, but 'twill never persuade us to *reform* and *amend*. Once more, the consideration of his *Mercy* is naturally apt when we are gone astray to *invite* us to return, with the hopeful prospect it gives us of *pardon* and *reconciliation*; but while we look upon it under the notion of a *blind* pity, or *effeminate* easiness and tenderness of Nature, that will admit of no *severity* how wholesome soever or necessary to the ends of Government; instead of *moving* us to repentance, it will *animate* us in our rebellion. In fine, the consideration of his *Goodness* is naturally apt to work upon our *Ingenuity*, and to draw us Godwards with *the cords of a man*, and *the bonds of love*; but while we mistake it for a blind Partiality, that chuses its Favourites without *reason*, and *rewards* them without *respect* to their Qualifications, instead of *captivating* our love, 'twill *provoke* our *disdain*, and *excite* in us a secret *contempt* and *aversion*.

Thus though the nature of God be in it self a most fruitful Topick of *Motives* and *Arguments* to engage us to *serve* and *obey* him, yet by the false representations that are sometimes made of it, it may be *perverted* into an *inducement* to wickedness, and made a plausible pretence to *encourage* and *justify* in us our rebellions against him. Whilst

we look upon God as he is in himself; shining with his own unstained and immaculate Glories, there is nothing more apt to *influence* all the *springs* of motion within us; to *inflame* our love, *encourage* our hope, and *alarm* our fear, and by *these* to set the *Wheels* of our Obedience agoing. For there is nothing in humane nature that is capable of being *moved* and *affected* by *Reason*; which hath not an answerable reason in the nature of God to *move* and *affect* it. And as in him there are all the *reasons* that can *affect* us, so there is all the *force* and *efficacy* of those reasons, every thing in him being *perfect* and *infinite*; in him there is an infinite *beauty* to attract our *love*, an infinite *good* to inflame our *desire*, an infinite *kindness* to affect our *ingenuity*, an infinite *justice* armed with an infinite *power* to awaken our *fear*, an infinite *mercy* to invite our *hope*, and an infinite *truth* to confirm and support it. So that 'tis beyond the power of all humane imagination to *frame* or *fancy* an Object that is so every way fitted to *affect* humane nature, and *influence* all its Principles of action, as God in himself is. Whilst therefore we apprehend him *truly*, and as he is in himself, the consideration of him must needs be of wonderful force to *oblige* us to *serve* and *obey* him, and there is not one of all those glorious perfecti-
 ons in which his Nature is arrayed, but will suggest to us some *powerful* perswasive to *Piety* and *Vertue*, and either by our *fear* or our *hope*, our *love* or our *gratitude*, incline our hearts to keep his Commandments. So that if we are ignorant of his perfections, or do entertain *false* Notions concerning them, we shall either want those Mo-

gives to Piety which they naturally suggest, or draw Arguments from them to encourage and justify us in our rebellions against him. And thus you see in all these instances how indispensably necessary right Notions of God are to engage us to serve and obey him.

SECT. II.

Rules for the forming right Apprehensions of God.

Dionysius the Areopagite, and from him all the Schoolmen, assign three ways by which we are to frame our apprehensions of the Nature of God, viz. *Viam Causalitatis*, *viam Eminentiae*, & *viam Remotionis*, i. e. the way of Causality, the way of Eminency, and the way of Remotion. The first consists in arguing from those perfections which God hath caused and produced in his Creatures to the perfections of his Nature. For whatsoever degrees of perfection there are in the Creature, they must either be uncreated, which is a contradiction, or flow from the Creator as from the immense Ocean of all perfection; but 'tis impossible they should flow from him, unless they were first in him. So that when we behold such and such perfections in the Creature, we may from them most certainly infer that the same are all in God, who is the cause and fountain of them; and though the divine Nature

Nature abounds with *innumerable* Vertues and Perfections, yet 'tis impossible for us by our own *natural* light to *discover* any other of them than those of which he himself hath *imprinted* some *specimens* upon created Beings; these being the only *Scales* by which our understanding can *ascend* to the *reach* and *view* of the divine perfections. But because all *created* perfections are not only *short* in their *degrees*, but also intermingled with *defects* in their very *kind* and *nature*; therefore in attributing them to God we ought carefully to abstract from them whatever is *defective* whether it be in *kind* or *degree*. For God is the cause of *perfection* only, but not of *defect*; in which so far forth as it is *natural* to *created* Beings, hath *no* cause at all, but is merely a *negation* or *non-entity*. For every *created* thing was a *negation* or *non-entity* before ever it had a *positive* being, and it had only *so-much* of its *primitive* *negation* taken away from it, as it had *positive* being *conferred* on it: and therefore so far forth as it is, its *being* is to be attributed to that *sovereign* cause that produced it, but so far forth as it is *not*, its *not-being* is to be attributed to that *Original Non-entity* out of which it was produced. For that which was *once* nothing would *still* have been nothing, had it not been for the *cause* that gave *being* to it; and therefore that it is *so far* nothing still, *i. e.* *limited* and *defective*, is only to be attributed to its own *primitive* nothingness. As for instance, if I give a poor man an hundred pounds; that he is worth *so much* Money is wholly owing to *me*, but that he is not worth a hundred *more* is owing only to his own *poverty*; and just so; that I have such and such

perfections of being is wholly owing to God who produced me out of nothing, but that I have such and such *defects* of being is only owing to that *Non-entity* out of which he produced me; and therefore since our *perfections* are derived from God, but not our *defects*, 'tis altogether as *unreasonable* to attribute the *latter* to him, as it is *reasonable* to attribute the *former*.

Now the *defects* of created perfections which we are to *remove* and *abstract* from God in our conceptions of him, are of two sorts: First of *the thing*; Secondly, of *the mode of the thing*. The defect of *the thing* is when the thing *it-self* is such as that it wholly excludes something much better and more perfect; thus *matter* for instance is defective in the thing, because it excludes *spiritual* and *immaterial* substance, which is much more excellent than it self. The defect of the *mode of the thing*, is when the thing is so excellent in *it self*, as that it excludes nothing better, but yet is deficient in *degrees* of perfection. As for instance, *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, *Reason* and *Understanding*, are things so excellent *in themselves*, as that they exclude nothing that is more excellent, but yet as residing in *created* Beings want a great many *possible degrees* of perfection. Now both these defects being *natural* are *uncaused*, and so cannot proceed from the Author of Nature, and not proceeding from him, they cannot be supposed to be *in him*, and therefore in our conceptions of him ought not to be attributed to him. In respect therefore of these *twofold* defects in created perfections, it is necessary we should conceive of God in the way *Remotion* and *Eminence*, as well as of *Causality*; *other*

otherwise we shall *injuriously* attribute to him the *Defects* of his Creatures, of which he is *not* the cause, as well as their *perfections* of which he *is*. If therefore we would *do God right* in our thoughts and conceptions of him, we must in the first place remove from him all defect *in the thing*, that is, all *matter* and *material* perfections; because they are defective in their very *kind* and *nature*, as excluding such substance and perfections as are incomparably more *excellent* than themselves; and this is to conceive of him in the way of *Remotion*, which consists in *removing* all kind of *matter* and *material* affections from our *thoughts* and *apprehensions* of God. And then in the second place we must abstract from him all defect *in the mode of the thing*, *i. e.* all the defect of *degrees* of these *spiritual* perfections of the Creature which we attribute to him, and *raise* and *exalt* them in our own minds to their utmost *height* and *eminence*; and this is to conceive of him in the way of *eminency*, which consists in ascribing to God the *short* and *limited* perfections of his Creatures *abstracted* from all *defect* and *limitation*. These *three* ways therefore are all indispensably *necessary* to lead us to a *true* discovery of the Nature of God; as will yet farther appear by the following *Rules* I shall lay down for the forming a *right* notion and apprehension of him.

First, If we would think *aright* of God, we must attribute all *possible perfection* to him.

Secondly, In *forming* our Notions of his Perfections we must take our *rise* from the Perfections we behold in his *Creatures*.

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Thirdly, In ascribing to him the perfections of his Creatures we must *abstract* from them every thing that is *defective* and *imperfect*.

Fourthly, In arguing from the perfections of the Creature to the perfections of God, we must distinguish between the *state* and *relations* of God and Creature.

Fifthly, Though in arguing from the perfections of the Creature to the perfections of God we are not to subject him to the Rules of a Creature, yet we are not always to suppose his *Will* and his *Power* to be in perfect *subjection* to the perfections of his *Nature*.

Sixthly, In conceiving of his Perfections we must always suppose them to be exactly *harmonious* and *consistent* with each other.

I. To the forming of a right apprehension of God, it is necessary that we ascribe to him all possible perfection. For he being the *first* and *supreme* cause from whence all the perfections of Being are derived; must necessarily include all perfection in himself; and be all those perfections which he hath communicated to others; for how can he give that which he hath not? It is true indeed, free causes may give less to their effects than they have in themselves, but it is impossible they should give more; though they may withhold from those effects any perfection or degree of perfection which they have; they cannot derive to them any which they have not. Whatsoever therefore is a perfection of Being, must necessarily be essential to that supreme cause from whence all Being is derived; otherwise there would be more in his effects than there

there is *in himself*, and consequently more than he could *give*, or be the *cause of*, which is a contradiction.

And as all those perfections that are in *created* Beings must necessarily *exist* in the nature of God, so must all those too that are *possible in themselves*. For every perfection that is possible in it self must be *possible to him* who is the *cause of* all things; but no perfection can be *possible to him* that is not *actually* in him; for no *cause* can produce that perfection in *another* which it hath not in *it self*, and therefore if there be any perfection that is not *in him*, 'tis impossible it should ever be produced *by him*, and that which is impossible to *God* must be impossible in his *own nature*, that which is not an object of *omnipotent* power is not an object of *any* power, and that which is not an object of *any* power, is in it self *impossible*. Since therefore every perfection that is possible in it self must be possible to *God*, and since no perfection that is not *in him* can be possible *to him*; it necessarily follows, that all the perfections that are *possible in themselves* are *actually* existing in the Nature of *God*.

II. In *forming* our Notions of *God's* perfections, we must take our *rise* from those perfections which we behold in his *Creatures*. For our understanding being too *short-sighted* to penetrate *immediately* into the *substance* and *essence* of things, hath no other way to *know* and *apprehend* them, but either by their *causes* or by their *effects*; but now *God* being the *first* and *supreme* fountain of all causes cannot be known by his *cause*, because he hath *none*, and therefore is knowable only by

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his effects, that is, by the works of his Creation that lie before us, and are within the prospect of our understandings; in the which all that is excellent and good is an illustrious Comment and Paraphrase upon God.

Now the effects of God are all reducible to these four generals, *Substance* or *Essence*, *Life*, *Sense* and *Reason*; all which are in *man*, who is the *Epitome* of the World, and a compleat Model of all the Works of God; and therefore not only all these, but all the proper *Excellencies* and *Perfections* of these must be supposed to be in God, from whom they are derived.

The first effect of God is *substance*. Now the proper perfections of substance are *Amplitude* and *Fulness* of Being. By the *Amplitude* of substance, I mean its *greatness* or *largeness* as to the *diffusion* or extent of it, in opposition to *littleness*, or, which is the same thing, to being *defined* to, or *circumscribed* within a *small* and *inconsiderable* space; by the *Fulness* of substance, I mean its having *more* of *Essence* or *Being*, by which it is *more* removed from *not being*, in opposition to things that have but *little* being in them, that are of so *fleeting* and *transitory* a nature as that they are *next* to *nothing*. Wherefore in conceiving of God, we must ascribe to him these perfections of substance, even to their *utmost possibility*, that is, we must conceive him to be a Being of *infinite Amplitude*, that is neither *defined* nor *circumscribed* within any certain space, but *co-exists* with, and *penetrates* and *passes through* all things; and by thus conceiving of him we attribute to him *Immensity*, which consists in being *unconfined* by

any bounds of space in the *out-spreading* of himself to all places that we can *see* or *imagine*, and infinitely *beyond* them. And then in conceiving of him we must also ascribe to him *infinite Fullness* of Being, by which he is so *infinitely* removed from *not being*, as that he cannot *but* be ; and by thus conceiving of him, we attribute to him *necessary existence*, which consists in being out of all *possibility* of *not being*.

But then secondly, another of those Works of God from which we are to take our rise in conceiving of his Perfections, is *Life*. For he is the *cause* and *fountain* of all that life that is in the World, and therefore must not only have life in himself, but the *utmost perfection* of it also that is *possible*. Now the Perfections of life are *Activity* and *Duration* ; by *Activity* I mean a vigorous *power* and *ability* to act, in opposition to *weakness* and *impotence*, which must needs be a *great* perfection of Life, which is the *spring* and *principle* of Action ; by *Duration* I mean a *long* continuance of Life, in opposition to that which is *short* and *momentary* ; for the more *lasting* the life is, the more *perfect* it is, and the *more* there is of it. Wherefore in conceiving of God we must ascribe to him the *utmost* perfection of *life* that is *possible* ; that is, we must conceive him to be *infinitely active* and *powerful*, and doth what he *pleases* in Heaven and on Earth, and can effect whatsoever is *possible* in it self, and not *repugnant* to the *other* perfections of his Nature ; and in thus conceiving of him, we attribute *Omnipotence* to him, which consists in an *ability* to do *every thing* that doth not *imply a contradiction*, either to the nature of the
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things themselves, or to the nature and perfections of the *doer*; and then in conceiving of him we must also ascribe to him an *infinite duration* of Life, that is, a life that is not *bounded* either by a *beginning* or an *end*, but is *from everlasting to everlasting*, and *co-exists* and runs *Parallel* with all Duration *past*, and *present*, and *to come*; and by thus conceiving of him we attribute *Eternity* to him, which consists in a *boundless* duration of life without any term of *beginning* or *end*.

But then thirdly, Another of these effects of God from which we are to take our rise in conceiving the Perfections of God, is *Sense*; by which I do not understand *carnal* or *material* sense only, which consists in *perceiving* the *strokes* and *impressions* of *material* Objects on our *sensories*, but sense in the general, whether it be of *material* or *spiritual* Beings. For that *spiritual* Beings have as *exquisite* a sense of *spiritual* Objects, as *corporal* of *corporeal* ones there is no doubt to be made; because otherwise we must suppose them *insensible* both of *pleasure* and *pain*. Now the perfection of sense is *Quickness* and *Sagacity* of Perception, whether it be of *painful* or of *pleasant*, *grateful* or *ungrateful* Objects; and that is to be found not only in *Beasts* and *Men*, but also in *separated* spirits, in *Angels*, and in *God himself*. For though none of these have any *corporeal* sense to *feel* and *perceive* the impressions of *corporeal* Objects, yet that both *Angels* and *separated* Spirits have a *spiritual* sense of *spiritual* impressions, by which they are subjected to *pain* and *pleasure*, cannot be denied; and though God by the infinite perfection of his Nature is exempt from

from all sense of pain, yet it cannot be supposed that he who is the *fountain* from whence all sense is *derived* should himself be *insensible*; and if he be not, we ought to suppose him as sensible of all that is truly *pleasant* and *good* as it is possible to be; and where there is no *infinite good*, as there is in the nature of God, it is possible to be *infinitely sensible* of it; and in thus conceiving, we attribute to him *infinite Happiness*. For what else is an *infinite sense* of good but *infinite pleasure* and *happiness*; and this is the happiness of God, that he is *infinitely perfect* in himself, and *infinitely sensible* of his own perfections and therein *infinitely pleased* and *delighted*.

Fourthly and lastly, Another of those Works of God from whence we are to take our rise in conceiving of his perfections, is *Reason*. For that *light* of reason which shineth in *Humane* and *Angelical* minds being *rayed* forth, and *derived* from him, he must be supposed not only to have reason *in himself*, but to have it in its utmost *possible perfection*. Now the perfection of reason consists in *Knowledge* and *Wisdom*, in the *Understanding*, and *Rectitude* or *Righteousness* in the *Will*. By *Knowledge* I mean considering and understanding things *absolutely* as they are in their *own Natures*, in their *Powers* and *Properties*, *Differences* and *Circumstances*. By *Wisdom* I understand a through consideration of things as they are *related* to one another under the Notion of *means* and *ends*, and of their *fitness* or *unfitness* to the end and purposes they are designed for. Wherefore in conceiving of God we must ascribe to him all *possible Knowledge* and *Wisdom*, that
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is, a *perfect* comprehension of all things that either *are*, or *have been*, or *shall be*, or *can be*; in short, a knowledge infinitely *extensive*, as comprehending all *knowable* Objects, and infinitely *intensive*, as seeing every *single* Object in all its *relations*, *dependencies*, and *circumstances* with a most *perfect* and *infallible* view; and in thus conceiving of him we attribute to him *Omniscience* and *infinite Wisdom*. By *Rectitude* or *Righteousness* in the *Will*, which is the other perfection of Reason, I mean a *conformity* of the *Will*, and consequently of the *affections* and *actions* to all that right reason *dictates* and *prescribes*; for the proper office of reason is to *conduct* the *Will*, and to give *bounds* and *measures* to our principles of action; and in *following* right reason, and *choosing* and *refusing* by its eternal *prescriptions*, consists the *Rectitude* of the *Will*, and in that all *Moral* perfection. In conceiving of God therefore we must attribute to him all those *moral perfections* which consist in the *intire* compliance of his *Will* with the Dictates of his *infallible Reason*, and *choosing* every thing which right reason *approves*, and *refusing* every thing which it *disallows*, and this with the most perfect *freedom* and *exactness*, and in thus conceiving of him we attribute to him infinite *Goodness*, infinite *Justice*, and infinite *Truth*. For as for the first, *viz.* infinite *Goodness*, which consists in the *invariable* inclination of his *Will* to do good to, and procure the happiness of his *Creatures*, by which he is infinitely removed from *Envy* and *Malice*, right reason dictates to him that being infinitely happy *in himself*, the *best* and most *becoming* thing he can do, is to *pro-*

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pagate his own *likeness* and *resemblance* by doing good to, and procuring the happiness of *others*; and that *Envy* and *Malice*, which are the properties of *poor* and *indigent* Beings, are infinitely *unbecoming* him who is a *self-sufficient* Nature: and accordingly his *Will*, which always follows his *Reason* is infinitely *propense* to the *one*, and *averse* to the *other*. And as for the second, which is infinite *Justice*, which consists in dealing with his *Creatures* according to their several *deserts*, by which he is infinitely removed from all *partiality* and *injustice*, right reason dictates to him, that since there is an *immutable* good and evil in the actions of *free* and *reasonable* Agents, it is fit that those who *do* good should *receive* good from him, who is the *supreme Judge* and *Moderator*, and those who *do* evil, evil, in *proportion* to the good and evil of their doings; and that to *reward* evil actions, and to *punish* good ones, or to reward those that are *less* good *beyond* those that are *more*, or punish those that are *more* evil *beneath* those that are *less*, is to go *cross* to the natures and and reasons of things; and by these Dictates of *Reason*, his *Will* is *invariably* regulated in all its transactions with his *Creatures*. Lastly, as for infinite *Truth*, which consists in a perfect *agreement* of his *declarations* with his *intentions*, especially in matters of *Promise*, whereby he is infinitely removed from all *deceit* and *falsehood*, right reason dictates to him, that to *speak truth* is the only natural *end* of *speaking*, that to *promise* is to *give a right*, and to *intend* to perform *strict justice*; that on the contrary, *lying* perverts the use of *Speech*, and betrays a
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baseness and meanness of spirit, that to deceive is to injure, and to falsifie promise is to commit a Robbery ; and accordingly his Will which is ever guided by his reason, embraces truth, and rejects fallhood with infinite abhorrence.

And thus from the various *perfections* of God's *Works* which are *before us*, we may fairly argue to all the *perfections* of *God himself*. For whatsoever *perfections* he hath *given*, he must *have*, and whatsoever *perfections* he *hath*, he must have *so far as it is possible* ; for if it be possible, it must be within his *power*, and if it be within his power to be sure 'tis included in his *Nature* ; otherwise he must chuse to be *less* perfect when it is in his power to be *more*. And by thus taking our rise to God from the *perfections* of the *Creature*, we discover him to be an *immense self-existing substance*, that is *omnipotent, eternal, infinitely knowing and wise, just and good, faithful and happy*. But to render our discovery yet more compleat,

III. It is necessary that in ascribing to him the perfection of the *Creature* we *abstract* from them every thing that is *defective* and *imperfect*. For to be sure there is nothing can be defective or imperfect in the *Cause* and *Author* of all perfection. So that whereas all other Beings have some *defect* or other intermingled with their *perfections*, and do either *want* some kind of perfection, or some degree of those kinds wherewith they are adorned God hath all *kinds* and all *degrees* of all kinds of perfection ; and so we must conceive of him, if we would *do him right* when we attribute to him the above-named *perfections*. As for instance, when we attribute to him the *perfections* of *substance*,

we must *abstract* from them the defect of *Corporeity* or *material* extension, which compared with *Spirituality* is a mighty defect and *imperfection* of substance, both as to its *Amplitude*, and *Fulness* of *Essence*. For no *Corporeal* substance can be at the same time in the same place where another corporeal substance is; because it consists of such parts as cannot *penetrate* each other; so that every body must be *limited* in *presence*, because it cannot be where another body is; whereas a *Spirit* being penetrable *it self*, can penetrate or pass through *all things*, and consequently be present at the same time, and in the same place, where not only other *Bodies* are, but other *Spirits* too. So that by attributing *body* or *matter* to God, we must necessarily *confine* and *limit* the *Amplitude* of his substance, which if it be *bodily* must necessarily be *excluded* from all those places which other bodily substances are, and consequently have but a *finite* and *limited* presence, which utterly destroys the infinite *Amplitude* or *Omnipresence* of his substance. And then *bodily* substances being all compounded of *divisible* parts, and consequently liable to be *divided* and *corrupted*, cannot have that *fulness* of Being in them which *Spirits* have, which are *simple* and *uncompounded* substances, and consequently void of all *principles* of *corruption*; so that by attributing *body* or *matter* to God, we *abstract* from the infinite *fulness* of his Being, and instead of ascribing to him *necessary existence*, which puts him beyond all *possibility* of *not being*, degrade him into a *divisible* and *corruptible* nature. Wherefore in attributing to God the perfections of substance, we must *abstract* from them

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all *matter* and *material* affections, and conceive of him as a most *pure* and *simple* Spirit.

Again, when we attribute to him the *perfections of life*, viz. *Power* or *Activity* and *Duration*, we must wholly *abstract* from them all those *imperfections* with which they are *commixt* in the *Creature*. As for instance, *activity* in the *Creature* is attended with *labour* and *pains*; the not abstracting of which from the *Activity* of *God* made *Epicurus* suppose him to be a *restive* Being, that *withdrew* himself from *Action*, for fear of *disturbing* his own *happiness* by it; whereas *labour* and *pains* are the *imperfections* of *activity*, and so ought not to be admitted into our conception of *God's*, which being *infinite*, there is nothing can be *difficult* or *uneasie* to him. For it is because of *imperfection* that *labour* and *trouble* do attend any *Beings* in their operations; could they do what they do *perfectly*, it would be no *labour* at all to them. *God* therefore having an *infinite power* to effect what he pleases, whatsoever he doth he doth it most *perfectly*, and consequently without any *toil* or *labour*; and since all things were *derived* from him, and are *dependent* upon him, they must all be *perfectly* subject to his *power*; and where there is perfect *subjection* there can be no *resistance*, and where there is no *resistance* there can be no *labour*. And then as for *Duration*, which is the other perfection of *Life*, in the *Creature* it is attended with *dependence*. For there is no life but *depends* upon *God*, to be *shortened* or *prolonged* according to his pleasure; the lives of all *Beings* are *maintained* and *supplied* by his *all-enlivening* power and influence, which if he *withdraw* from them

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but one moment, they presently *expire*; so that the duration of all *created* life is *dependent* and *precarious*; and even those Beings that shall live *for ever* have no other *tenure* of life but God's *Will* and *Pleasure*, who with the *breath* of his Nostrils can *blow* them out when he pleases. But the *duration* of God's Life is altogether *independent*; for he subsists *of himself*, from that infinite *fulness* of Being that is in him, and *both* done so from all Eternity *past* when there was no other cause but himself in being, and therefore *can* do so to all Eternity *to come* without the *support* or *assistance* of any other cause. So that he is not at all beholden for his duration to the *good will* and *pleasure* of any *other* Being, but derives from an inexhaustible *spring* of life within *himself*, whence he also derives life to all other Beings.

Again, when we attribute to him the perfection of *sense*, viz. *quickness* and *exquisiteness* of perception, we must wholly abstract from it all that imperfection with which it is attended in the Creature; for in them it is attended with sundry *affections* which argue *imperfection* in their *nature* and *happiness*; such as *Fear*, *Sorrow*, *Repentance*, *Desperation*, and the like; all which argue a defect of *Power* or *Wisdom*, and proceed from a quick sense of evil *past*, or *present*, or *to come*, which is inconsistent with perfect Happiness. When therefore we attribute to God this perfection of *sense*, we must abstract from it all those affections which proceed from the sense of *evil* or *pain*. For he is so infinitely perfect both in *nature* and *happiness*, that no evil can approach him to *vex* or *disturb* him, or make any *painful* im-

Pressions on his Nature ; and being so, it is impossible that in propriety of speech he should either *fear*, or *grieve*, or *repent*, or *despair*. All these affections indeed are in Scripture attributed to him, but then it is in an *improper* and *metaphorical* sence ; not as if he did at any time *feel* these passions within *himself*, but because he *demeans* himself towards *us* as if he *did* ; nor as if the affections *themselves* had any place in his *Nature*, but because the natural *effects* of them appear in his *actions* and *behaviour*. And though there is no doubt but he *resents* all those evils which good men *suffer*, and bad men *commit*, yet it is not from any *painful* impression that they make upon his Nature ; for he neither *feels* the *miseries* he *pities* and *relieves* , nor is *vexed* at the *sins* he *detests* and *abhors*, but all the resentment he hath both of the evil of our *sufferings* and *sins* is perfectly *calm* to himself, and devoid of all *passion* and *disturbance*. 'Tis true, his *Will* being perfectly *reasonable* must be *differently* affected towards *different* Objects, and *contrarily* affected towards *contrary* Objects, because they propose to it different and *contrary Reasons* ; and therefore as it must be affected with *complacency* towards good Objects, so it must be affected with *abhorrence* towards bad ; but this abhorrence arises not either from any *sense* of hurt they *do* him, or *fear* of hurt they *can* do him, his Nature being wholly *impassible*, but from the *repugnancy* they bear to his own *infallible* reason ; and his abhorrence being wholly founded in his *Reason*, and not in any *sense* or *feeling* he hath of the evils he detests, must upon this account be stript of all *grief* and *vexation*.

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Wherefore in attributing to God the perfection of *sense*, we must tak care to abstract from it all those *affections* which spring out of the *imperfection* either of our *nature*, or our *happiness*.

But then in the last place, when we attribute to him the perfections of *Reason*, viz. *Knowledge* and *Rectitude of Will*, we must also abstract from them all those imperfections with which they are attended in the *Creatures*; as for instance, *Knowledge* in the *Creature* is attended with *reasoning* and *discoursing*, that is, *inferring* one thing from another, arguing *Consequents* from *Principles*, and *Effects* from *Causes*, which is a great *imperfection* of *Knowledge*, and a plain indication that it is *narrow* and *confined* in it self, and not to be improved without *labour* and *study*. For that we are fain to infer one thing out of another is an evident token that we know but *in part*, because in this way our knowledge must be *successive*, and we must know one thing *before* we can know another; we must know the *Principles* before we can know the *Consequents*, and the *Causes* before the *Effects*; else how can we *deduce* the one from the other? And this *deducing* or *inferring* requires a great deal of *study* and *labour*. Wherefore in attributing *Knowledge* to God, we must abstract from it this imperfection of *reasoning* and *discourse*; for his *Knowledge* being *infinite* or *unconfined* by the utmost *extention* and *duration* of things, doth at one *Intuition* or *simple view* behold all things *past*, and *present*, and *to come*, yea, *whenever*, *wheresoever*, or *howsoever* possible; and beholding as he doth all *Consequents* in their *Principles*, all *Effects* in their *Causes*, he doth not know one

thing *after* another, but comprehends them *all together* in his infinite mind, without any *succession* or *improvement*. So that from all Eternity *past* he knew as much as he doth *now*, and as much as he *will* do to all Eternity *to come*; for his Knowledge was always *infinite*, and what is infinite admits not either of *more* or *less*. And then for that other perfection of reason which consists in *Rectitude of Will*, in the Creature it is *acquired*, even as that Knowledge and Wisdom is by which it is *measured* and *regulated*. For Rectitude of *Will* consisting in *chusing* and *refusing* as right Reason *directs*, must needs be *acquired* in the Creature, because that *Right Reason* is so, by which it chuses and refuses; so that there is the same defect and imperfection in the Rectitude of *our* Wills as there is in *our* Reason and Knowledge, that is, that it is not *altogether*, but acquired by *degrees*, and so it may be is infinitely *successive* and *improvable*. Wherefore in attributing to God Rectitude of Will, which, as I shewed before, consists in *Goodness*, and *Justice*, and *Truth*, we are wholly to abstract from it this imperfection of being *acquired*. For it is *essential* to his Will to *follow* the Dictates of his Understanding and Reason, and *essential* to his Understanding to *dictate* to his Will all the *parts* and *degrees* of Goodness, Justice, and Truth; so that the rectitude of his Will is *infinite* both as to the *extent* and *degrees* of it, there being no good, no degree of good that an infinite reason can *propose*, but what his Will doth most readily *inbrace*, and perfectly *comply* with; so that the Rectitude of his Will is such as could not be acquired *part after part*, *degree after degree*,

gree, because it is *essentially infinite*; and from everlasting he was as good, and as just, and as faithful as *now*, and to everlasting he cannot be better, or juster, or faithfuller than he *is*, because what is essentially infinite admits no *improvement* either of *parts* or *degrees*. And thus you see how in all these respects it is absolutely necessary to the framing a right Apprehension of God, that in ascribing to him the perfections of the *Creature*, we abstract all those *defects* and *imperfections* with which they are intermixt.

IV. It is necessary that in *arguing* from the perfections of the *Creature* to the perfections of God, we distinguish between the *state* and *relations* of God and *Creature*. For there are many things which are perfections in the *Creature* considering *their state* which would be imperfections in God considering *his*; and so on the contrary. As for instance, to be *dependent* and *humble*, *resigned* and *submissive*; to be *grateful* and *devout* are perfections in the *Creature*, because there is a Being infinitely *above* them in all *degrees* of all *sorts* of perfection, in *Knowledge* and *Wisdom*, in *Power* and *Goodness*, in *Justice* and *Truth*; a Being to whom they owe *themselves*, and all the *good things* they possess, and upon whom they depend for all that they *are*, or *enjoy*, or *hope* for; and therefore it infinitely becomes them to *abase* themselves before him, to *trust* to, and *depend* on him, and *re-sign* themselves to him; to *supplicate* him for all they *want*, and *thank* him for all they *enjoy*; but for God to be *humble*, who is infinitely perfect *above* all, for God to *depend*, who is the *upholder* of all, for him to *submit* who is *Lord* over all, or

to be *devout* and *grateful*, who is the *supreme Fountain* and *Proprietor* of all, would be to *sneak* and *condescend* far beneath the infinite dignity of his Nature. As on the contrary, to love *himself* above all, to set up *his Will* above all other Wills, and to *expect* and *require* that they should do *homage* to it ; to exact *Adoration* and *Worship* from all, and to *appropriate* it to himself from all other Beings, are excellencies and perfections in *God*, because he is infinitely *amiable* above all other Beings, and therefore ought in reason to *love* himself above all, infinitely *exalted* above all other Beings, and therefore ought in reason to expect that all other Beings should be *subject* to him ; in a word, because *he*, and he *alone* is *God*, and hath all divine perfections appropriate to himself, and therefore ought in reason to expect that all *capable* Beings should *acknowledge* his Divinity by *fit* actions, and *restrain* their acknowledgment of it wholly to *himself* ; but for a *Creature*, that is infinitely *less* lovely than *God*, and infinitely *inferiour* to him, to *love* it self, and *set up* its own Will above him, and *invade* his Throne and Divinity, and *arrogate* to it self his Honour and Worship, is not only *unreasonable*, but *impious*. In this case therefore we must carefully distinguish between the *states* of *God* and *Creature*, and not attribute to *him* those perfections of the *Creature* which are proper to *it*, under the notion of *Creature*, because in so doing we shall infinitely *degrade* him ; but whatsoever is in *it self* a perfection, *precisely* considered from all respects to the *state* and *relations* of a *Creature*, that we ought to ascribe to *God* in its utmost *extent* and *degree*.

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And yet even here it will in many cases be necessary for us to keep this distinction of *God* and *Creature* in our minds : for though whatsoever is *absolutely* and in *it self* a perfection in the *Creature*, is also a perfection in *God* , yet considering the *state* of *God*, that may be an exercise of absolute perfection in *him*, which would be imperfection in a *Creature*. As for instance, *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, and *Justice* are absolute perfections in a *Creature*, and therefore ought to be attributed to *God* ; but it doth not thence follow that *that* is no exercise of these perfections in *God* which is not so in *Creatures*. It is an act of *Wisdom* in a *Creature* to pursue his ends by the most *probable* means, but it doth not therefore follow that it is an act of *folly* in *God* to effect his ends by *contrary* means, because he being not only *all wise*, but *all powerful*, which no *Creature* is, can make the most *contrary* means as *subservient* to his ends as the most *probable* ; and therefore sometimes to *display* the greatness of his *Power*, and to *excite* our *attention* and *reverence* he chuses to operate by *contrary* means, and when he doth so he chuseth most *wisely*. Again, it is an act of *Goodness* in *us* to *succour* the unfortunate, and *rescue* oppressed innocence from *undeserved* calamities ; and not to do so, when we can with *ease*, and without any *prejudice* to our selves, is a high degree of *malice* and *ill nature*. But it doth not therefore follow that it is an act of *malice* in *God* to permit innocence to *suffer*, when with *ease*, and without the least *damage* to himself he can relieve it, because being infinitely *wise* and *powerful*, which no *Creature* is, he can infallibly bring *good* out of *evil*,

and advance us to *happiness* by *suffering*; and therefore sometimes he permits the innocent to suffer *evil*, thereby to procure them some *great* and *lasting* good; and when he doth so it is an act of great *Goodness* in him. Once more, it is *Justice* in the *Creature* not to *kill* or *hurt* the *Innocent*, not to *deprive* them of any *good* they are *rightfully* possess'd of, and to act contrary is great *injustice*, because we have no right to *another* man's *Life*, or *Limbs*, or *Goods*, unless he *forfeits* them to us by some *unjust* attempt to deprive us of *ours*; but it doth not therefore follow, that it would be *unjust* in *God* to do so, who being the supreme *Proprietor* of our *Lives*, and *Limbs*, and *Goods*, which no *Creature* is of any other *Creatures*, can justly *resume* them when he pleases, be we never so *innocent*, because they are *his own*; whatever he gave us he can *take away* from us, without any *injury*, because he rather *lent* it than *gave* it us, reserving the absolute *propriety* in himself; and *his* right being *supreme*, *absolute*, and *independent*, and *ours* but *subordinate* and *conditional*, whatsoever we can justly do he can justly do, and abundantly more; so that though we may argue this or that is *just* in the *Creature*, therefore it is *just* in *God*; yet we cannot argue *à contra*, this or that is *just* in *God*, therefore it is *just* in the *Creature*, because *his* right in *all* things is *infinitely* *Paramount* to *our* right in *any* thing; and therefore though he cannot without our own *fault* and *forfeiture* reduce us to a *worse* state than that of *not being* wherein he *found* us, because to do so would be equivalent to the *taking away* from us more than he *gave* us, and consequently more than he hath a *right* to, yet

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God's right being infinitely more *absolute* and *re-
tensive* than ours, he can *justly* take away from
us infinitely more than we can *justly* take away
from *one another*. And therefore to correct the
iniquities of wicked *Nations* and *Parents*, God
sometimes lays his hand upon good *Kings*, and
innocent *Children*, and either deprives them of
their *comforts*, and pursues them with constant
infirmities, or puts an *untimely* period to their
lives; and when he doth so, he hath an *absolute*
right to do it, which no *other* Being can *pretend* to.
Wherefore in attributing to God the perfections
of the Creature we are carefully to distinguish be-
tween the *state of God* and *Creatures*, and neither
to ascribe to him any of those perfections which
belong to a Creature, *as a Creature*, nor to bound
the *exercise* of those absolute perfections we
ascribe to him by the *Rules* and *Limitations* of the
Creature.

V. Although in *arguing* from the perfections of
the Creature to the perfections of God we are not
to subject him to the *Rules* of a Creature, yet we
ought always to suppose his *Will* and *Power* to
be intirely subject to the *Moral* perfections of his
own Nature. For God who is infinitely exalted
above all other Beings can be subject to no *other*
Law but that of his own *Essential Wisdom*, and
Justice, and *Goodness*; and since every thing hath
a right to exercise its own faculties so far forth as
it is *just* and *lawful*, God who is subject to no
other Law but only that of his own perfections,
hath an *essential* right to *will* and *do* whatever
that Law allows and *approves* of. Now the *per-
fections* of God which give *Law* to his *Will* and
Power,

Power, are those which, for distinction sake, we call *Moral*, because their Office is the same in him with that of *moral Vertues* in the *Creature*, viz. to conduct and regulate his Will and Powers of action; and these *Moral* perfections are his *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, *Justice* and *Truth*, which being all essential to him are as much a Law to his Will and Power, as *Moral Laws* are to ours; And to suppose his Will and Power not to be perfectly subject to them, is to suppose him a very defective and imperfect Being, a lawful Will and Power being the greatest defect in Nature. Wherefore to secure our minds against all injurious apprehensions of God, this is a most necessary Rule, that we conceive him to be such a Being as can neither Will nor Act any thing but what his own Essential *Wisdom*, and *Goodness*, and *Justice* do approve; that in all his *Decrees*, *Purposes*, *Choices*, and *Actions* consults his *Moral* perfections, and perfectly regulates himself by them, and doth neither chuse nor refuse, elect nor reprobate, save nor damn without their full consent and approbation. For to affirm that he is not obliged to regulate himself by *Wisdom*, and *Justice*, and *Goodness*, or that he can do otherwise, is to attribute to him a Power to Will and Act foolishly, maliciously, and unjustly, which indeed is not so properly Power as Impotence; and to suppose that he can thus Will and Act, is to deny that he is infinitely Wise, and Just, and Good, which utterly excludes all possibility of being otherwise in any respect or degree. For to be infinitely Wise and Just is to be infinitely removed from folly and injustice, which nothing can be that hath the least degree of possibility to act

unwisely

unwisely or unjustly. Wherefore in conceiving of God it is always to be supposed that his *Will* and *Power* are so *immutably* subject to the *Moral* perfections of his Nature, as that it is *impossible* for him to *Will* or *Act* against them. For all the *liberty* of *Will* that is determinable to *good* or *evil*, *just* or *unjust*, is a *flaw* and *imperfection* in the reasonable nature, because it speaks the *Will* to be *defective* in that which is the *utmost* possibility of *Goodness* and *Justice*, *i. e.* in being *immutably* determined thereunto ; and therefore to attribute such a liberty to God, is to *scandalize* his Nature, and *reproach* it with imperfection. For all that *Power* which is not conducted by *Justice* and *Goodness* is only power to *do mischief*, to *Tyrannize* over other Beings, and to *sport* and *play* with their miseries ; which is so far from being a *perfection* of *Power*, that it proceeds from the most wretched *weakness* and *impotence*. So that by attributing such a power to God, we foully *aspersion* and *blaspheme* him, and instead of a God imagine a *worse* Devil, and more qualified to do mischief than any that are now in Hell, who though they are powerful enough to do mischief, are none of them *Omni-potently* mischievous ; it is to imagine a God without a *Deity*, that is, without that *Essential* Rectitude of *Will* wherein all his *Moral* perfections do consist, which are the *Crown* and *Glory* of his Nature. For to be *good* and *just* are the *brightest* Rays of the Deity, the Rays that *illustrate* and *glorify* all his other perfections, and without which, infinite *Knowledge* and infinite *Power* would be nothing but infinite *Craft* and *Mischief* ; so that to imagine that he hath any *Will* or *Power* that

is not *Essentially* subject to his *Moral* perfections, is to *deface* the very *beauty* of his Nature, and represent him the most *horrid* thing in the World. Wherefore in conceiving of God we ought to fix *this* as the *main* and *fundamental* Rule of our thoughts, that he hath no *Will* to *Chuse*, or *Power* to *Act* but what are in *perfect* subjection to infinite *Wisdom*, and *Justice*, and *Goodness*; and this will secure our minds from all those *rigid* and *sour* apprehensions of him, which by *reflecting* on his *Moral* perfections do him the greatest *dishonour*, and represent him the most *disadvantageously* to mankind.

VI. And lastly, it is also necessary that in conceiving of the perfections of God we always suppose them exactly *harmonious* and *consistent* with each other. For all perfections of Being, so far forth as they are perfections, are *consistent* with each other, and like *strait* lines drawn from the same *Centre* run on together without *crossing* or *interfering*. For there is nothing *contrary* to perfection but *imperfection*, and there is no *disagreement* but what arises from *contrariety*. When therefore we conceive of the perfections of God, we must so conceive of them, as that there may be no manner of *inconsistency* or *disagreement* between them, otherwise we must admit into our conceptions of them something or other that is *defective* or *imperfect*. As for instance, in God there is infinite *Wisdom*, and infinite *Justice*, infinite *Goodness*, and infinite *Mercy*; wherefore if we would conceive aright of these his glorious perfections, we must take care not to admit any Notion of any one of them that renders it repug-

nant to any *other*, but so to conceive of them *altogether* as that they may mutually *accord* and *agree* with each other. For while we apprehend his Goodness to be such as that it will not *accord* with his Wisdom, we must either suppose his Wisdom to be *craft*, or his Goodness to be *Folly*; and whilst we apprehend his Mercy to be such as that it will not *agree* with his Justice, we must either suppose his Justice to be *Cruelty*, or his Mercy to be *blind Pity* and *Fondness*; and it is certain that that Goodness cannot be a perfection which *exceeds* the *measures* of Wisdom, nor that Mercy neither which *transgresses* the *bounds* of Justice, and so on the contrary. For if either God's Goodness *excludes* his Wisdom, or his Wisdom his Goodness; if either his Mercy *swallow* up his Justice, or his Justice his Mercy, there is an apparent *repugnance* and *contrariety* between them, and where there is a contrariety there must be *imperfection* in one, or *another*, or *both*.

Wherefore if we would apprehend them *altogether*, as they *truly* are in God, that is, under the notion of *perfections*, we must so conceive of them as that in all respects they may be perfectly *consistent* and *harmonious*; as that his Wisdom may not *clash* with his Goodness, nor his Goodness with his Wisdom; as that his Mercy may not *justle* with his Justice, nor his Justice with his Mercy; that is, we must conceive him to be as *wise* as he can be with infinite goodness, as *good* as he can be with infinite wisdom, as *just* as he can be with infinite mercy, and as *merciful* as he can be with infinite justice, which is to be *wise*, and *good*, and *just*, and *merciful*, so far as it is a

perfection to be so. For to be *wise* beyond what is good, is *Craft*; to be *good* beyond what is wise, is *Dotage*; to be *just* beyond what is merciful, is *Rigour*; to be *merciful* beyond what is just, is *Easiness*; that is, they are all *imperfection*, so far as they are *beyond* what is *perfect*. Wherefore we ought to be very careful not to represent these his *Moral Perfections* or *running-a tilt* at one another, but to conceive of them *all together* as one *intire* perfection, which though like the Centre of a Circle it hath many Lines drawn from it round about, and so is looked upon sometimes as the term of *this* Line, and sometimes of *that*, yet is but one *common* and *undivided* term to them all; or, to speak more plainly, though it exerts it self in *different* ways and actions, and operates *diversly* according to the diversities of its Objects, and accordingly admits of divers *Names*, such as *Wisdom*, *Goodness*, *Justice*, and *Mercy*, yet is in it self but one *simple* and *indivisible* principle of action, all whose operations how *diverse* soever are such as perfectly *accord* with each other, whose acts of *Wisdom* are all infinitely *good*, whose acts of *Goodness* are all infinitely *wise*, whose acts of *Justice* are infinitely *merciful*, and whose acts of *Mercy* are infinitely *just*; so that in *this*, as well as in their *extension* and *degrees* they are all most *perfect*, viz. that they always operate with mutual *consent*, and in perfect *harmony*. And while we *thus* conceive of the divine perfections, our minds will be mightily secured against all those *false* apprehensions of God which lead to *superstition* and *presumption*; for we shall so apprehend his *wisdom* and *justice* as not to be super-

superstitiously *afraid*, and so apprehend his *goodness* and *mercy* as not to be presumptuously *secure*; and as on the one hand his *Justice* will protect his *Mercy* from being *abused* by our *wanton* security, so on the other hand his *goodness* will protect his *wisdom* from being *misrepresented* by our *anxious* suspicion. For while we consider his *mercy* thus *tempered* with his *justice*, and his *wisdom* with his *goodness*, we can neither expect impunity from the one if we *continue* wicked, nor yet suspect any *ill design* against us in the other if we *return* from our *evil ways*, and persevere in *well-doing*.

SECT. II.

Of the Cause of our mis-apprehensions of God.

I Now proceed to the *last* thing I proposed, which was to *assign* and *remove* the *causes* of mens *mis-apprehensions* of God; many of which are so *secret* and *obscure*, so *peculiar* to the *frame* and *temper* of mens brains, so *interwoven* with the infinite *varieties* of humane *Constitutions*, that it is very *difficult*, if not *impossible*, to *trace* them so as to make an *exact* enumeration of them all; and therefore I shall only assign the most *common* and *visible* causes by which the generality of Men are *mis-led* in their *Apprehensions* of the divine Nature, which are reducible to these six Heads:

First,

First, *Ignorance* of what is the *true* perfection of our *own* Nature.

Secondly, Framing our Notions of God according to the model of our own *humour* and *temper*.

Thirdly, *Obstinate partiality* to our own sinful *lusts* and *affections*.

Fourthly, Measuring God's Nature by *particular Providences*.

Fifthly, Taking up our Notions of God from *obscure* and *particular* passages, and not from the *plain* and *general* current of Scripture.

Sixthly, *Indevotion*.

I. One great cause of our mis-apprehensions of God is *Ignorance* of what is the *true* perfection of our *own* Natures. For, as I shewed before, in conceiving of the perfections of God we must take our *rise* from those perfections we behold in his *Creatures*, and particularly in our *own* Natures, wherein there is a composition of all *created* perfections; so that while we are ignorant of what is the true perfection of our *own* Natures, our thoughts can have no *rule* or *aim* whereby to judge of God's. That he hath all those perfections in *himself* which he hath derived to *us*, is the *Fundamental* Maxim upon which we are to erect our Notions of him; and therefore unless we know *what* those perfections are which he hath derived to *us*, and *wherein* they consist, our mind hath no *footing* or *foundation* whereon to raise any certain Idea of him. For since we have no other way to conceive of *his* perfections but by our *own*, how is it possible that while we are ignorant of our own,

own, we should ever conceive *aright* of his? This, therefore is one great reason why men do so *grossly* misconceive of God, because they have no true Notion of their *own* perfection, by which they are to form their conceptions of *his*.

For whereas the *true* perfection of humane Nature consists in *Moral* goodness, or an *universal* compliance of its *Will*, *Affections*, and *Actions*, with those everlasting *Laws* of *righteousness* which *right reason* prescribes, how many are there that look upon this as a very *mean* and *carnal* accomplishment, and place all their perfection in things of a quite *different* nature, *viz.* in the *Ebbs* and *Flows* of their *sensitive* passion, and the extraordinary *Fermentations* of their *blood* and *spirits*, that is to say, in unaccountable *dejections* and *exaltations* of mind, in vehement *impressions* of *fancy* and *Mechanical* *movements* of *Affection*, in *Raptures* and *Extacies* and *Hypochondriacal* *incomes* and *manifestations*, that have nothing of *substantial* *Vertue* or *Piety* in them, nor commonly any other effect but to cause men to *renounce* that *Righteousness* which they never *had*, and *rely* upon that which they have no *Title* to, and to *sooth* and *tickle* their *fancies*, and *blow* them up into *glorious* *Opinions* of themselves, and *Triumphant* assurances of their being the *Darlings* and *Favourites* of *God*, whilst poor *Moral* men, that make conscience of *regulating* their *affections* and *actions* by the eternal *Laws* of *Righteousness*, are look'd upon by them with a *scornful* compassion, and placed in the *lowermost* form of *Sinners*, at the *greatest* distance from the *Kingdom* of *God*. Now when men take such *false* measures of their

own perfection, how is it possible they should conceive *aright* of the perfections of God, which they have no other way to conceive of but only by *arguing* from their *own*? Wherefore in order to the forming our *Idea's* of God's perfections, it is necessary we should first fix the *true* Notion of our *own*; which is no hard matter for us to do. For our Nature being *reasonable*, to be sure its perfection must consist in willing, affecting and acting *reasonably*, or which is the same thing, in *Governing* it self in all its *relations* and *circumstances* by those immutable *Laws* of *goodness* which *right reason* prescribes, and which are *exemplified* to us in the Holy Scripture; and when we have fixt it in our minds *this* Notion of our *own* perfection, it will naturally conduct our thoughts to God's, and let us see that his perfection consists not in a *lawless* and *boundless* Will, that *decrees* without *forethought*, *resolves* without *reason*, and *Wills* because it *will*, and then *executes* its own *blind* and *unaccountable* purposes by dint of *irresistible* power without any regard to *right* or *wrong*; For if we rightly understand our *own* perfection, we cannot but discern that such a Will as *this* is one of the most *monstrous* deformities in Nature, because it is the most *Diametrically opposite* to the *true* Idea of our own Perfection, which while we *attentively* fix our eyes on, we cannot but *infer* from it that the true perfection of God consists in the *unvariable* determination of his *Will* by the all-comprehending *reason* of his *Mind*, or in *choosing* and *refusing*, *decreeing* and *executing* upon such reasons as best becomes a *God* to *will* and *act* on, *i. e.* upon such as are infinitely *wise*,
and

and good, and just, and merciful. For if to Will and Act upon such reasons as *these* be the perfection of *our* Nature, we cannot but conclude that it is the perfection of *Gods* too; but if we are *ignorant* of our own perfection, we must necessarily think of God at *Rovers*, without any certain aim or rule to square and direct our apprehensions.

II. Another cause of our mis-apprehension of God, is our framing our Notions of him according to the Model of our own particular *humour* and *temper*. For *self-love* being the most *vehement* affection of Humane Nature, and that upon which all its *other* affections are founded, there is no one Vice to which we are more universally obnoxious than that of excessive *fondness* and *partiality* to our selves, which makes us too often *dote* upon the *deformities*, and even *idolize* the *Vices* of our own temper. So that whether our nature be *stern*, *sour*, and *imperious*, or *fond*, *easy* and *indulgent*, we are apt to *admire* it as a great perfection merely because it is *Ours*, without *measuring* it by those eternal *Reasons* which are the *Rules* of Good and Evil, *Perfection* and *Imperfection*; and then whatever we look upon as a perfection in *our selves*, we naturally attribute to God, who is the *cause* and *fountain* of all perfection. And hence it comes to pass that mens minds have been always tinctured with such *false* and *repugnant* Opinions of God, because they frame their judgments of him not so much by their *reason* as by their *temper* and *humour*; and so their *different* humours being not

only *unreasonable* in themselves, but *repugnant* and *contrary* to one another, produce in them not only *false* and *unreasonable*, but *contrary* and *repugnant* opinions of God. Thus for instance, the *Epicureans* who were a *soft* and *voluptuous* Sect, entirely addicted to *ease* and *pleasure*, fancied God to be *such a one as themselves*, a Being that was wholly *sequestered* from action, and *confined* to an *Extramundane Paradise*, where he lived in perfect *ease*, and was entertained with infinite *Luxuries*, without ever concerning his *thoughts* with any thing *abroad*; for *this* they thought was the top of all perfection, and therefore *thus* they would have chosen to live had they been *Gods* themselves. Thus the *Stoicks*, who were a sort of very *morose* and *inflexible* people, copied their *Notions* of God from their own *complexion*, supposing him to be an *inflexible* Being that was utterly incapable of being *moved* and *affected* by the *reasons* of things, but was wholly governed by a *stern* and *inexorable Fate*. And accordingly the *Scythians* and *Thracians*, the *Gauls* and *Carthaginians*, who were a people of a *bloody* and *barbarous* nature, pictured their *Gods* from their own *temper*, imagining them to be of a *blood-thirsty* nature, that delighted to feed their hungry *Nostrils* with their *Nidorous reeks* and *streams* of humane *gore*. Whereas, on the contrary, the *Platonists*, who were generally of a very *soft* and *amorous* nature, took their measure of God *thereby*, and so framed an *Idea* of him that was as *soft* and *amorous* as their own *complexion*, composed altogether of *loves*, and *smiles*, and *endearments*,
without

without the least intermixture of *vengeance* and *severity*, how *just* soever in it self, or *necessary* to the well government of the World. Thus as the *Ethiopians* pictured their Gods *black* because they were black themselves, so generally men have been always prone to represent God in the colour of their *own* complexions ; which is the cause that they many times represent him so utterly *unlike* to *himself*, because out of an unreasonable *partiality* to themselves they first mistake the *deformities* of their own natures for *perfections*, and then *Deifie* them into *Divine Attributes*. Thou thoughtest, saith God, that I was altogether such a one as thy self, Psalm 50. 21. that is, thou didst frame thy conceptions of me according to the Pattern of thy own *ill nature*, and so thoughtest *basely* and *unworthily* of me. And hence I doubt not springs most of those *mis-apprehensions* of God which have been received among *Christians*. For how is it possible for any man that is not of a *fierce* and *cruel* nature *himself*, to believe it consistent with the nature of God to snatch poor Infants from their Mothers Womb, that never *actually* offended him, and hurl them into the flames of Hell? And considering the *stern* and *inflexible* temper of the famous Author of the *Horrible Decree*, though otherwise a rare and admirable person, there is too much reason to suspect that he transcribed his *own* nature into his *Doctrine*, and modelled his *Divinity* by his *Temper*. And so on the contrary, who but a man of excessive *fondness* and *partiality*, that *loves* beyond all *reason*, and invincibly *doats* upon the *deformities* of his own darlings, could ever imagine it consistent with the *wisdom*

and holiness of God to chuse his favourites without reason, and when he hath chosen them, not only to overlook all their faults, but to hide them from his own eyes with the *Mantle* of anothers Righteousness, that so how ill soever they behave themselves, he may never see cause to be displeased with them? From these and other instances it is evident that one great cause of our mis-apprehensions of God, is our measuring *his* nature by our own. For first, our *partiality* to our selves makes us magnifie our own faults into *perfections*, and then whatsoever we reckon a perfection in *our selves* we naturally attribute to God, and so many times it comes to pass that our *Notions* of God are nothing but the *Images* of our selves, which *Narcissus*-like we fall in love with for no other reason but because they reflect our own *sweet likeness*. As therefore we would not *wrong* God in our own thoughts, we must take care not to attribute to him any thing of our own, but what is a *perfection* in the judgment of the most *impartial* reason; and because our *self-love* is apt to bribe our own *reason* into a favourable opinion of whatever is our own, we ought to admit nothing of our own into our *Notion* of God but what is *voted* a perfection by the *common reason* of *Mankind*.

III. Another cause of our mis-apprehensions of God is our obstinate *partiality* to our own sinful *lusts* and *affections*. For while men are *vehemently* addicted to any *sinful* courses, the true *Notion* of God must needs sit very *uneasily* on their minds, because it will be always *quarrelling* with them, *suggesting* arguments against them, and
alarming

alarming them with *dreadful* thoughts and *dire* apprehensions of a vengeance to come. For there is no *true* conception of God's *Nature* but what is pregnant with some *powerful* argument against *disobedience* to his *Will*; so that while we obstinately persist in disobedience to him, our *reason* cannot truly conceive of him without waging *War* against our *Lusts*. And while a Man is thus at *variance* with himself, and *one* end of his Soul is at *War* with the *other*, so that he cannot *gratify* his affection without *affronting* his reason, nor *comply* with his reason without doing *violence* to his affection, he can never be at ease *within*, till either he hath forced his affection to submit to his reason, or his reason to *submit* to his affection; but while a man's reason hath the *true* Notion of God and his perfections before it, 'twill be impossible for him to *reconcile* it to his sinful *affections*, against which, whenever he *coolly* reflects, it must necessarily dictate *bitter* Invectives and denounce *horrible* Sentences. So that if he be *obstinately* resolved to side with his sinful affections, he must either be content patiently to endure the *clamour* and *fury* of his own reason, which is one of the most *uneasy* Penances in the World, or endeavour to *corrupt* and *sophisticate* his Notions of God with such opinions as countenance his Lusts. And this, considering the mighty influence which mens *affections* have on their *reason*, is no hard matter to do; for the least *shew* of *probability*, back'd with a *strong* affection for an opinion, is of greater force with *corrupt* minds than the clearest *demonstration* against it. So that if the *Opinion* be but serviceable to the interest of a man's *lust*, that will en-

gage his *affection* on its side, and then the opinion having once retained those *powerful* Orators in its cause, it is secure of a very *favourable* Trial at the Tribunal of *Reason*, where in all probability only *one* side of the Question will be weighed, and Judgment will be given upon hearing the Arguments *for* it, without admitting any evidence *against* it.

Thus when men are *hunted* and *persecuted* through their wicked courses by the *true* Notions of God, it is expedient for them if they *resolve* to go on to take sanctuary in *false* ones, where their *Conscience* and *Will*, their *Reason* and *Affections* may dwell *quietly* together, and they may be as wicked as they please without any *disturbance*. And abundance of such false Notions there are *prepared* to their hands, which mens wicked minds have *invented* in the defence of their lusts. For thus some, to *ease* their Consciences, have *perswaded* themselves, that God is so wholly *taken up* with his *own* happiness as that he is not at *leisure* to concern himself about *humane* actions, and under this *persuasion* they *sin on* with full *security* that he will never *punish* them. Others on the contrary, to *reconcile* their lusts, *perswade* themselves that God is wonderfully concerned about *small* things; about *trifling* opinions and *indifferent* actions, and the *Rites* and *Modes*, and *Appendages* of his Worship, and under this *persuasion* they hope to *atone* him for all the *immoralities* of their lives by the *forms* and *outsides* of Religion, by *uncommanded* severities and *affected* singularities, by *contending* for *Opinions*, and *sticking* for *Parties*, and being *pragmatically* *zealous* about the *borders*

and *fringes* of Religion. Others there are that to quiet their *anxious* minds persuade themselves that God, in Christ at least, is all *Mercy* and *Goodness*, without the least alloy of *Righteousness*, *Severity*, or vindictive *Justice*; and being thus persuaded, they sin on *securely*, and under the *Wing* of his *Mercy* affront his *Authority*, without any *disturbance*. Others again, that to *stifle* the sense of their own *guilt* persuade themselves that God hath *irrevocably* determined the *everlasting* Fate of men without any respect to their *doings*, and that those whom he *will* save he will save *irresistibly* without any concurrence of *theirs*, whereas those whom he *will* *not* save he hath utterly *abandoned* to a dire necessity of *perishing* for ever; from whence they conclude, that if they are of the number of those that shall be *saved*, it is *needless* for them to endeavour *after* it, and if in the *List* of those that shall *perish*, it is in *vain* for them to endeavour to *prevent* it; and that therefore their wisest course is to *sin on*, and expect the *Event*. All which are only the *Artifices* of wickedness to *reconcile* mens *Consciences* to their *Lusts*, and *com-promise* the quarrel between God and their *wicked* lives, that so they may sin on for the future without *check* or *remorse*.

Wherefore if we would form a *right* Notion of God in our minds, and preserve it *pure* and *unsophisticated*, we must above all things beware not to let our *Lusts* intermingle with our *Reasonings* about him, nor to *bribe* us to assent to any *opinion* concerning him. For this is an eternal Maxim, That there is nothing can be true of the

most

most holy God, and gives the least countenance or protection to sin; and therefore when ever it makes for the interest of our Lusts to believe any opinion of him, for that reason we ought to reject it; for nothing can be true of God that is not perfectly consistent with his infinite Holiness, and nothing can be consistent with his infinite Holiness that is any way serviceable to the interest of sin; so that while we suffer our sinful interests to dictate to us our opinions of God, we make falsehood our Oracle, and the very foundation of our Faith is a Lye.

IV. Another great cause of our mis-apprehensions of God is our measuring his Nature by particular Providences. The tree is known by its fruit is the common Rule by which men judge of God as well as of one another, and it is most certain that every free Agent *is* as it doth, that the ordinary course of its Actions is an infallible Index of the inward dispositions and inclinations of its mind; but as for the actions of God, they are not to be judged of singly and apart from one another, because they have all one general drift and tendency, and so are mutually dependent upon one another, and closely linked together even from the first to the second, and so on to the last, in one continued Chain and Series; so that of all those innumerable actions whereof his general Providence consists, there is no one loose or independent Link, but every one is connected unto all the rest, and all the rest to every one throughout that mighty Chain. Wherefore unless we had an entire Prospect of the whole Series of God's actions, and of the mutual respects and relations which they

they bear to one another, it is impossible for us, without a *divine Revelation*, to make any *certain* judgment of *Particulars*. For though *this* or *that* particular action or providence of God, considered *separately* from all the rest, may have a very *pernicious* and *malevolent* Aspect, yet it is to be considered that no Action of God is what it *would* be if it were *apart* by it self, but what it *is* in *conjunction* with all the rest of his actions, and that *that* which by it self might prove very *pernicious*, may by being *contempered* with *others* of a *different* nature become exceeding *beneficial* to the World. For so in the Heavens there are sundry Stars of a very *malignant* aspect apart by *themselves*, which yet in *conjunction* with other Stars of a *different* temper do many times derive a most *benign* influence upon us. And if men can give no certain judgment of any single *Act* or *Scene* of God's *Providence* without comprehending at once the whole *Drama*, how is it possible they should take *true* measures of his *Nature* by any *particular* event that befalls them? For, for all they know those very Events which *singly* considered are most *noxious* to the World, may be most *beneficial* as they are *intermingled* and *contempered* with other *Providences*; so that while they measure God by *single* Events they will many times deduce *sour* and *rigid* opinions of him from those very *Providences* which are the highest instances of his *benignity* and *goodness*. Thus, for instance, should *Joseph* have framed his judgment of God's *Nature* by his being thrown into the *Pit*, sold into *Egypt*, and there cast into *Prison* for his *integrity* and *innocence*, what could he have thought

thought of him but that he was a very *envious* and *malicious* Being, that took *delight* in *afflicting* innocence, and *sported* himself with the *miseries* of his Creatures? And yet considering what *followed* upon these sad Providences, and how these were all of them but so many *steps* to his *advancement*, it is plain, that had he thought *thus*, he had thought very *injurious*ly; those very Providences from which he must have inferred God's *malice* to him, being in *conjunction* with what followed most illustrious instances of his *Goodness* towards him.

And yet how *commonly* do we see men pass judgment to God's *Nature* from such *particular* Providences? They see a world of *deplorable* Accidents, such as *Famines*, *Butcheries*, *Plagues*, and *Devastations*, in which themselves are many times involved, from whence they are ready to conclude, that certainly God would never *infect* or *suffer* these things if he were not of a very *froward*, *cruel*, and *implacable* nature; whereas did they but see these *sad* accidents as they lie *interwoven* with all the *rest* of his Providences, they would doubtless see infinite reason to conclude the quite *contrary*. Sometimes again they behold *Wickedness* *prosper* in this World, and *Vertue* and *Innocence* *depressed* and *trampled on*, from whence they are ready to conclude, either that that which we call *Vice* and *Vertue* are things *indifferent* to God, or that he is *unjust* in the distribution of *Rewards* and *Punishments*; whereas had they an *intire* comprehension of the whole *train* and *series* of his Providence, they would soon be convinced that even in these *cross* distributions

butions he doth most *equally* and most *effectually* Punish the *wicked*, and reward the *Good*; by rendering the *ones* Prosperity his *Bane*, and the *others* Adversity his *Restorative*. Sometimes again they are *denied* those *blessings* and *deliverances* which they have a long while *sought* with most importunate *cries* and *supplications*, from whence they are ready to conclude that God is of a *stern* and *inexorable* nature, not to be *moved* or *prevailed* with by *prayers* and *intreaties*; whereas could they but see through the whole *drift* of his Providence, they would easily be satisfied that the goods they *pray* for are many times *pregnant* with *evils*, and the evils they *deprecate*, with *goods* which are much *greater* than *themselves*, and that *that* is the reason why God was *deaf* to their *intreaties*, because he could not *grant* them what they *asked* without doing them some great *unkindness*, and that therefore these denials are so far from arguing him *stern* and *inexorable*, that, on the contrary, they are signal instances of his tender *mercy* and *compassions* towards us. If therefore we would conceive *aright* of God, we must not take our measures of his Nature by *particular Providences*, which many times import quite contrary to what they *seem* and *appear*, but having formed our Notions of his Nature out of those *perfections* we behold in his *Creatures*, by *them* we are to measure all his *particular* Providences, which though they are sometimes very *dark* and *obscure*, and *seemingly* repugnant to our common Notions of him, yet because we see not the *ends* and *reasons* of them, we ought to conclude them *good*, because they proceed from a *good God*.

V. Another main cause of our misapprehensions of God, is the taking up our Notions of him from *dark*, and *obscure*, and *single* passages, and not from the *plain* and *general* current of Scripture. There is no doubt but that whatsoever God hath *revealed* of himself in Scripture, is *true*, because *truth* and *veracity*, being a great *perfection* in it self, must needs be included in his Nature which is the Centre of *all* perfection; but yet since there are some things in Scripture hard to be understood *in themselves*, and other things difficult to *us*, who are not thoroughly acquainted with the *Customs* and *Controversies* they refer to, or with the *Phrase* and *Language* of the Age they were written in, it is impossible for us many times to comprehend its meaning by the mere *clink* and *sound* of its words, without expounding its *obscure* passages by its *plain* ones, and its *particular* propositions by its *general* current; and to found any *Doctrine* or *Opinion* upon *obscure* and *particular* Phrases, that *seemingly* contradicts the *plain* and *general* drift, and then to expound the *plain* into the *seeming* sense of the *obscure* and the *general* current into the *seeming* sense of the *particular* Phrase, is a most egregious *prevarication* on the Holy Scripture. And yet this *unreasonable* practice hath occasioned many *false* apprehensions of God in mens minds. For there is nothing more evident than that all along through the *general* current of Scripture God is represented to us as a most *benevolent* Being, that knows no *bounds* of *good-will*, but *stretches* out his *arms* unto *all* his Creation, and *receives* his whole off-spring, excepting only those *Prodigals* that

run away from him, with *free* and *impartial* embraces; as one that *would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*, and readily contributes to them all those *aids* and *assurances* that are necessary to the effecting of these *blessed* ends; that *reprobates* none from his *kindness* and *favour* but only such as *despise* and *reject* it, and never *abandons* any to *wretchedness* and *misery* till they have first *baffled* and *defeated* all his *arts* of *saving* them. Such is the representation of God which the *plain* and *general* scope of Scripture gives us; so that had men kept themselves to *this* rule of expounding *obscure* Texts by *plain* ones, and *particular* Phrases by the *general* scope, when they *seemingly* clash one with another, they had done *right* to God, and secured their *own* minds against sundry very *wrongful* apprehensions of him. For that God hath *destined* the *greatest* part of Mankind to *endless* calamity, without any *respect* to their *doings*; that he hath *two* Wills, *viz.* a *secret* and a *revealed* one; that his *revealed* Will is that he would have *all* men to be *saved*, and his *secret* one, that he would have the *greatest* part of them *perish*; that he hath imposed a Law upon men which without his *irresistible* grace they *cannot* obey, and notwithstanding he hath decreed to *with-hold* this grace from the *greatest* part of them, is resolved to persecute *all* that do not obey it with *everlasting* flames of *vengeance*; These, I say, are all of them such opinions as *reflect* very *dishonourably* upon God, and have no other foundation, but a *few* *particular* Phrases and *obscure* passages in Scripture, not only *abundance* of *plain* Texts, but the *general*

general drift and scope of it being of a quite *contrary* sense. So that had but this *necessary* Rule been observed, of interpreting *dark* passages by *plain*, and *particular* ones by the *general* scope, such *dishonourable* Opinions of God could never have found *shelter* under *Scripture Authority*. For I would fain know whether those Texts which declare God to be an *universal* lover of the Souls of men, be not far more *numerous* and *plain*, than those which *seemingly* restrain his affection to a *small select* number, and *reprobate* all the *rest* of Mankind; and if it be so, as I think no modest man can deny, how can this Doctrine be deduced from Scripture without forcing the far *greater* number of Texts to subscribe to the *smaller*, and the *plainer* to the *obscurer*, which is *contrary* to the most necessary *Rules* of *Interpretation*, and which, if *pursued*, will open a wide door to the *grossest* and most *fulsome* errors in Religion. Wherefore to secure our minds from *false* apprehensions of God, it is necessary that in consulting the Scripture concerning him, we should follow the *plain* and *general* drift of it, and not entertain any opinion of him upon the credit of a *few*, or of *obscure* Texts, which *more* or *plainer* ones seemingly contradict. For it is certain, that *that* Opinion is either *false*, or of *little* moment, that hath but *one* or *two* Texts to countenance it, and *that* very *dubious*, which hath none but *obscure* Texts to rely on; but when there are more and much *plainer* *against* it than *for* it, it must be *false*, or there is no *relying* upon Scripture, the sense whereof, as to all *particular* opinions, must be supposed to be that which the *most* and *plainest*

Texts do countenance: So that he who imbraces any Opinion that hath *more* and *plainer* Texts *against* it than *for* it, imbraces it for its *own* sake and not for the *Scriptures*.

VI. And lastly, Another cause of our mis-apprehensions of God is the great *dis-similitude* and *contrariety* of our Natures to *his*. For when men have nothing of God in them, nothing of those amiable *Graces* which are the *glory* and *lustre* of *his* Nature, it is impossible they should have any experience of him, any inward *taste* or *relish* of his perfections; so that they can only know him by the *hearing of the Ear*, by *Books*, and dry *discourse* and *reasoning*, which compared with *experimental* knowledge is very *uncertain* and *defective*. For between the *notional* and the *experimental* knowledge of God, there is the same difference as between the knowledge of a *Geographer* and a *Traveller*: the one hath only a *faint* and *rude* figure of *foreign* Countries in his head, copied from the *Globe* or *Geographical* descriptions; whereas the other having travelled through them, and beheld their *Situations*, and *Cities*, and *Rivers*, and conversed with their *People*, and *tasted* their *Fruits*, retains a *clear* and *lively* Idea of them, of the *exactness* whereof he hath as *firm* a certainty as of the truth of his own *senses*. Thus he who knows God only by *Books* and *Discourses*, can have but a *faint* and *imperfect* Idea of him; he may believe him to be *infinite* in all *kinds* and *degrees* of perfection, and *Goodness*, and *Mercy*, and *Justice*, and *Truth*, and be able to demonstrate it upon dry principles of *reason*; but having no *experience* of these perfections in *himself*, no *sense*

or *relish* of their *beauty* and *excellency*, his apprehensions of them are but *slight* and *obscure*, like a *deaf* Man's notions of *sounds*, or a *blind* Man's of *colours*, which for want of the evidence of *sense* cannot be so *clear*, and *certain*, and *distinct* as theirs are who *see* and *hear*. Whereas he who *partakes* of the perfections of God, and is in any degree *pure* as he is *pure*, and *holy* as he is *holy*, hath as it were *travelled* into his very *Nature*, and *seen* all his perfections by the *light* of an infallible *experience*; he knows what God is, not so much by *reasoning* and *discourse*, as by a *quick* and *lively* sense of the divine perfections, which he hath *copied* and *transcribed* into his own temper, and which, like the beams of the Sun, *light up* his thoughts to that *Fountain* of light from whence they were *derived*. And he who hath God's *Picture* in his own *breast*, and can see his perfections in the *Graces* and *Virtues* of his own *mind*, knows him by his *Sense* as well as by his *Reason*; he *sees* and *feels* God in the *Godlike* temper of his own *Soul*, the *Graces* whereof are so many *living* Images of God, and *sensible* Comments on his *Nature*, which render the man's Notions of him not only as *clear* and *distinct*, but also as *certain* and *indubitable* as any demonstration in *Geometry*. For there is no evidence will give us so *full* a certainty of things as that of our own *senses*; it was by *sensible* evidence that our Saviour demonstrated himself to be the *Messias*, and confuted the Infidelity of his Apostle *S. Thomas*; and it is certain that our *bodily* senses are not more *infallible* than is the *purified* sense of our minds. When therefore we are *transformed* into the like-

ness of God, and made *partakers* of his Nature, we shall have a *vital* sense and feeling of his perfections *within* us, by which the *true* Notions of him will be more *confirmed* and *ascertained* to us than by all the *reasons* and *demonstrations* in the World. For *now* we shall behold the *beauties* of God's Nature in the *God-like* dispositions of our *own*, and beholding his *Face* in the *Glass* of our Natures, whensoever we *reflect* on it, his perfections will be as *intimate* and *familiar* to us as the Graces of our *own* minds; which will not only *awaken* our thoughts into *frequent* Meditations of him, but also *heighten* and *improve* our Meditations into the most *glorious* Idea's of him. For when all is done, there is no man can *think* so *well* of God as he who hath a *God-like* Nature, because the *resemblance* he bears to him will not only frequently *raise up* his thoughts to God, but also *shape* them into a *conformity* with his Nature; whereas whilst we are *unlike* to God, we are not only *devoid* of all that evidence of his perfections which the *purified* sense of our nature would give us, and consequently our Notions of him for want of that evidence, will be only *superficial* and *uncertain*, but through our *partiality* to our own *ungodlike* dispositions, we shall be apt to entertain such Notions of him as are as unlike him as *our selves*. For either out of fondness to *our selves* we shall look upon our *ill dispositions* as *perfections*, and so attribute them to God, or out of fondness to *those* ill dispositions we shall be tempted to admit such Opinions of God as will *licence* and *indulge* them.

Wherefore if we would secure our minds against all *false apprehensions* of God, we must above all things endeavour to *purifie* our hearts from those *evil dispositions* which render us *unlike him*; from *sensuality* and *injustice*, from *pride* and *discontent*, from *envy*, *hatred*, and all *unchatableness*, which are the great *corrupters* of our minds, the bosom *Hereticks* that *seduce* and *pervert* us, and, as much as in us lies, to *conform* our selves to the nature of God, by practising the *contrary Virtues*; and when once by *imitating* the *perfections* of *his nature* we have *transcribed* them into our *own*, we shall *see* and *feel* him in our *selves*, and our *Sense* of him will *conduct* our *Reason*, our *Experience* of him will *correct* our *Knowledge*, and our *Vision* of him *consummate* our *Faith*; and we shall be more *enlightened* in our *knowledge* of him by beholding *his face* in the *sanctity* of our *own minds*, than by a *thousand Volumes* of *curious Speculations*.

And now, having seen what the true *causes* of all our *mis-apprehensions* of God are, let us from henceforward *beware* of them, and, so far as in us lies, labour to *avoid* them, and considering of what *vast advantage* to our Religion *right* and *true* Notions of God are, let us *diligently* apply our selves to the *above-named Rules* for the *regulating* our apprehensions concerning him; that so having *thoroughly purged* our thoughts of all *erroneous Opinions*, we may see God *truly* as he is, arrayed in all the *genuine* perfections of his nature. And then we shall find our *lives* and *affections* under the *Influence* of the most *powerful reasons* in the World. For every thing of God is full of *persuasion*, all his

his perfections have a *constraining* Rhetorick in them that by a kind of *Moral* violence *conquers* all that attend to it, and *seises* and *captivates* their *Wills* in despite of all the *reluctances* of their *natures*. So that when once our minds are thoroughly instructed with the *true* Notions of God, we shall not need to seek *abroad* for *Motives* and *Arguments*, for we shall have a *Fountain* of divine Oratory within our own *Bosoms*, from whence our *Wills* and *Affections* will be continually watered with the most *fruitful* inducements to *Piety* and *Vertue*; insomuch that which way soever we turn our selves we shall see our selves *surrounded* with such *invincible* reasons to *trust* in God and to *fear* him, to *admire* and *love* him, to *obey* and *worship* him, as will *animate* our faculties, *wing* and *inspire* our *drooping* indeavours, and carry us on with unspeakable *Chearfulness* and *Alacrity* through all the *weary* stages of Religion; and we shall no longer look upon Religion as the *burthen* and *oppression* of our nature, but readily *embrace* it as our *Ornament* and *Crown*, our *Glory* and *Happiness*, as being fully convinced that in *serving* of God we serve not only the *greatest*, but the *best* Master in the World.

F I N I S.

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